

Sight and Sound

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and innocence

'Mean Streets'
and the juke-box

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in interview

Catherine Deneuve
and sexuality

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Temptation

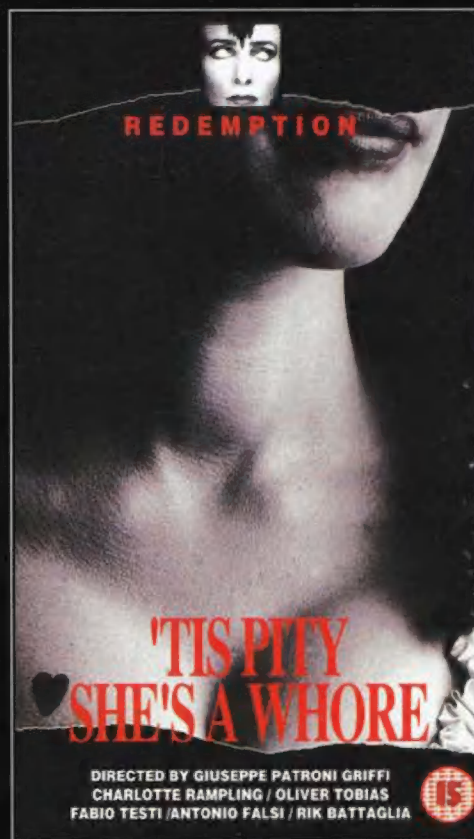
Geena Davis in 'Accidental Hero'





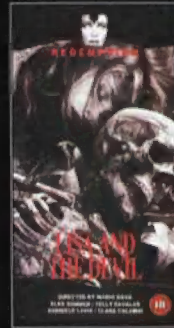
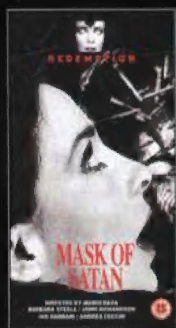
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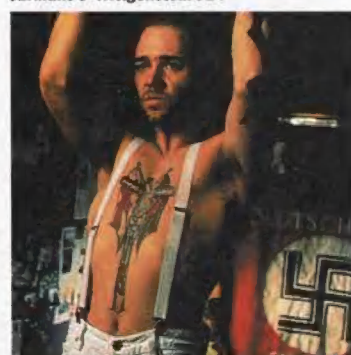
Sight and Sound



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Moral panic: the sequel

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X. M. Duverger is a lecturer at the University of West of England

Lizzie Francke is completing a book on women screenwriters

Sue Harper's book on British costume film will be published this year

Anne Jackel is completing a book on European co-production

Rikki Morgan is a lecturer in Modern Languages, Thames Valley University
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Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has written widely on European cinema

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Video Supplement

Ian Christie is the co-editor of *Inside the Film Factory*

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Kim Newman, novelist and critic, has written *Nightmare Movies*

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Annette Kuhn teaches film at Glasgow University

David Thompson has recently edited *Levinson on Levinson*

Peter Wollen, critic and film-maker, has recently published a book on *Singin' in the Rain*

Near the end of Sally Potter's fine film *Orlando*, there is a touching domestic sequence in which Orlando's child films her parent with a camcorder. This innocent moment, the pleasure of the child making images, is made more poignant given the context of hysteria that now surrounds the relationship between children and film. To listen to the politicians and to read the newspapers over the last weeks is to enter a world where cameras, films and screens of all sorts threaten at the very least the literacy of children, at worst their very being.

The Prime Minister and one of his cabinet demand an end to "screen violence". A columnist in *The Guardian* rushes to agree. The tabloids still demand the blood of Alan Yentob, the new controller of BBC1, even after he shifted a contentious episode of the popular series *Casualty* to after the 9.00pm watershed. *The Times* publishes an article by a teacher that asserts that images drown the imagination; *The Sunday Times* stages a much publicised event on cinema violence; the relevant books are already in the bookshops. No feature article on the cruel murder of James Bulger is complete without reference to a computer games arcade, for all the world as if such arcades should be in the dock alongside the accused.

For anyone with a sense of history, or a memory that stretches back even to the early 80s, the signs are obvious: 'We are in a moral panic'. But it is difficult to know what to prescribe for patients in such a condition. A dose of reading might do the trick: begin with Geoffrey Pearson's *Hooligan*, which looks at the history of moral panics around youth from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and then take as a supplement Martin Barker's *A Haunt of Fears*, a study of the moral panic around US comics and children in the mid-50s.

Of course this may not be effective, since it is not clear what the focus of the current moral panic is. After all, the object of the horror seems to be the screen in general – whether cinematic, televisual or computer – rather than any particular screen. And in order to be able to respond intelligently to the disquiet, it is

necessary at least to separate out the one screen from another.

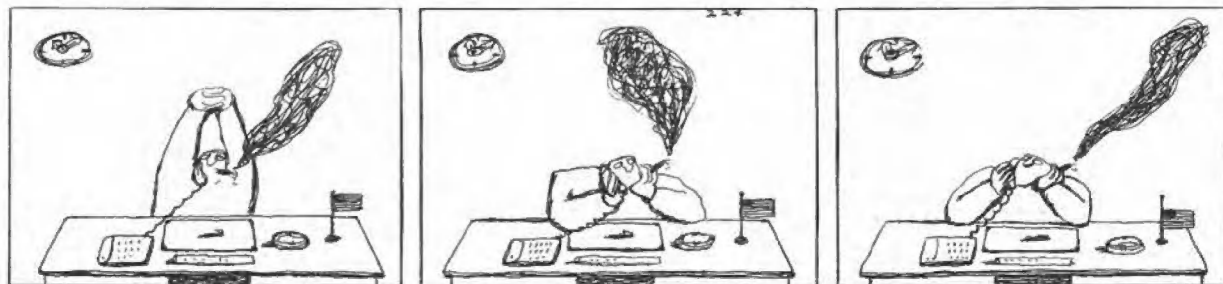
Television is certainly in general less controversial than 10 to 15 years ago, and it is difficult not to feel that the anger currently directed at the BBC's "irresponsibility" is calculated to coerce the corporation into total blandness at a moment when a new controller is finding his feet and when John Birt's tax affairs make him especially vulnerable. It was cheering to hear Alan Yentob resist the invitation to innocuousness. The last thing we need at the moment is television that is wall-to-wall *Barchester Towers*.

The arguments about film violence have a much longer history – and the positions are well rehearsed. But it would be idle to pretend that the emergence of video, which gives children and young people access to films the BBFC's classification system has traditionally denied them, has not put the liberal position under pressure. What is needed now is some large-scale research to document what video young people watch at home, what they think about what they watch, and what are their parents' motivations and judgments. At present not only do we not have the answers, but we scarcely know how to frame the questions. Research will not end the argument, and certainly will not determine the judgment, but it might help to stop anecdote ("Girl of 11 has seen *Silence of the Lambs* 200 times", *Daily Mirror*) from running the debate.

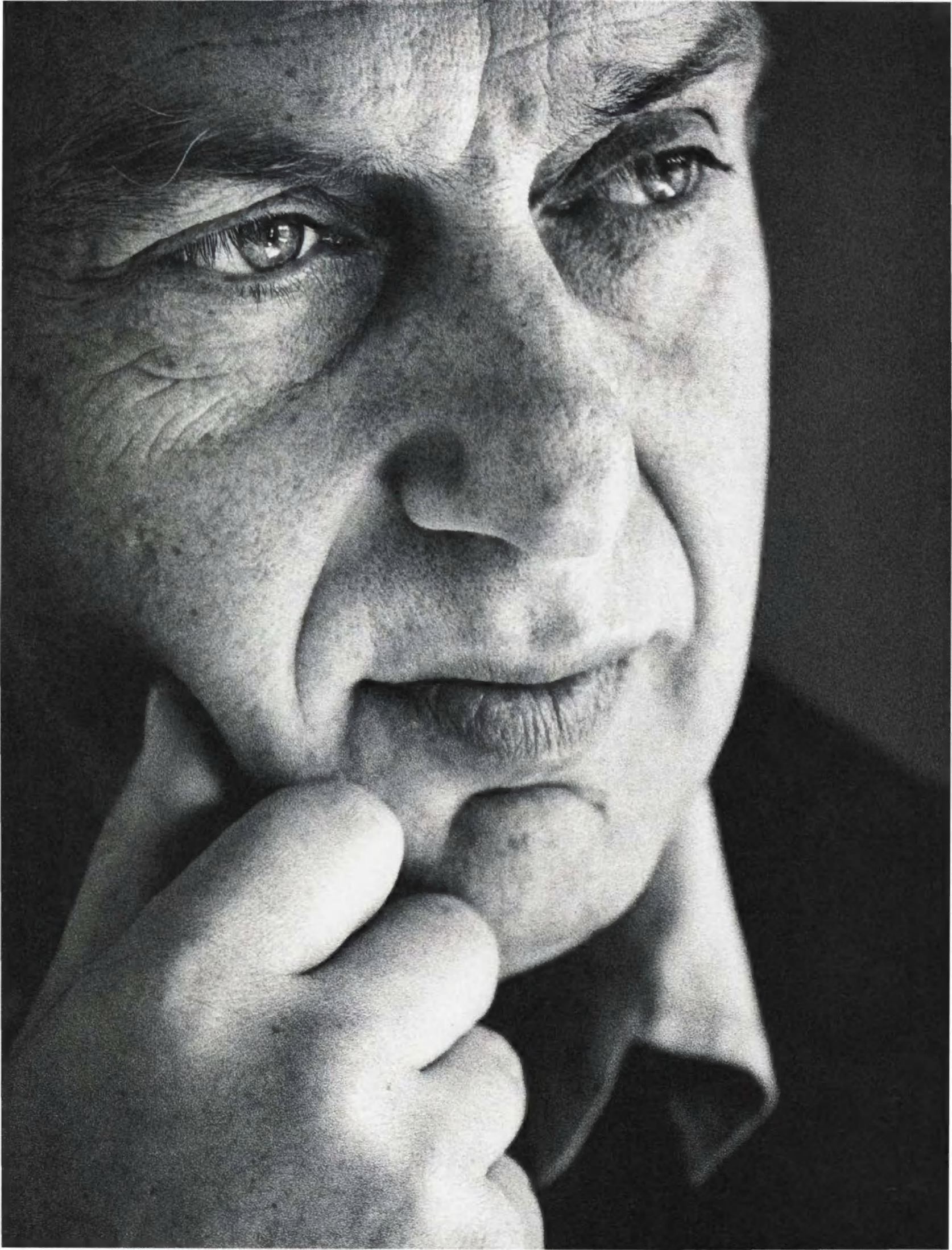
In the meantime, while the Moral panic, it is worth noticing that the same government that loathes screen violence seems at best indifferent, at worst hostile to the inclusion of Media Studies in the National Curriculum. Yet those who are suspicious of the flickering screen should surely want school students to know how to 'read' films – and even to learn how to make them. The small child in Potter's *Orlando*, at ease with cameras, offers a better vision of the future than the same child, ignorant of how films are made, surrounded by panicking adults who foolishly believe that they can keep young people from contamination by the modern world.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry here's how it works. Every few years a bunch of Brit movies take our Oscars, do box-office, & have us guilt-tripping about the crassness of our own product – then quick as you can say "3 picture deal", they're in Hollywood making our crass films for us. So don't worry.'



● The title of Stephen Frears' first big studio movie, Columbia's \$55 million *Accidental Hero*, has an appropriately self-apologetic ring to it, in keeping with the spirit of its director, Britain's foremost accidental auteur. There has never been a film-maker quite like Frears for belittling his own... well, whatever it is that film-makers do. Frears, for one, rarely seems to be sure: "It embarrasses me to be thought more artistic than I am," he has said at almost every available opportunity. When it comes to the input of producers: "I like to be told what sort of film it is and what I should be thinking." On the subject of film crews: "They could perfectly well do without me. I never know what I'm supposed to be doing anyway." Frears likes to tell a story, true or not, about how Darryl Zanuck shot the ending to *My Darling Clementine*, directed by one of his heroes, John Ford. "Directors," he avers, "are treated with an absurd amount of respect... Actually, I think of myself as a plumber or a carpenter."

But this foppish, *distract* attitude co-exists with a more tenacious side to his temperament, which may maul the ears of interviewers, put actors through the mangle, and lead to threatened Hollywood walk-outs, as happened on *Accidental Hero*. Looking as though he's just stepped out of a spin-dryer, the 51-year-old director can come over in person as a disconcerting amalgam of the Mad Hatter, Tony Hancock and Harold Skimpole, the dangerously false-naïve eccentric in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*. His hard-to-read manner of airiness and pragmatism, gaiety and grit, facetiousness and spleen, permeates his movies and makes them exceptionally difficult to categorise.

The famous Frears sardonicism emerges, on the face of it, in diluted form in *Accidental Hero*. The film is an agreeably ingenious comedy about a petty thief (Dustin Hoffman) - a

grouchy, broken-windscreen-wiper of a man - who can't bring himself to believe that he's capable of something decent. When an aeroplane comes down on the road in front of his car, he snarls, "What's the problem, pal?" at the screaming passengers trapped in the about-to-ignite fuselage, then reluctantly helps them all to safety. The incident is passing from his mind until a low-lifer he's met (Andy Garcia) bogusly claims a \$1 million reward from a television station for being the anonymous "Angel of Flight 104". Geena Davis plays a slinky, go-getting television reporter who was on the flight, and who engineers the media hoopla that builds Garcia into a cross between Norman Schwarzkopf and the Messiah.

Ben Hecht and Preston Sturges were, by all accounts, texts from which Frears drew nourishment during the shoot. The story is a play on the word 'credit' in an age when the moral landscape has been entirely bought up and remarketed by the media: the funniest thing in the film is the way Garcia's dishonest reticence does duty for quiet courage in the public eye. Geena Davis talks with the foxy-voiced speed of a Sturges or Capra character, but the overall pace lags well behind. The screwball tradition of the 30s and 40s is inflected, too, with much more contemporary neuroses, set off by the inward-looking performance of Hoffman - endlessly embroidering scenes with low-register rigmaroles and a wandering-eyed intensity. Hoffman's performance-tuning and script adjustments reportedly caused the production much anguish during the shoot, but his numerous sideways moments of actorly business are just the sort of fatuous-fastidious embellishments we expect in a Stephen Frears movie - as are the picture's twisting story course, generic indeterminacy, safaris across class lines and frequently modulating pitch.

Alan Bennett once said that the director is as much interested in the happenings on the edge of the frame as those at the centre, and the endings of his films have often been the site of restlessness and indecision. Hoffman said that he eventually based his doubting, stubble-bum character on Frears himself. It makes for a curious kind of tail-wagging-the-dog reverse auteurism - the content of a film working its anxieties out through its director, rather than the other way around. But it seems appropriate to the odd, deferential methodology of the man at the helm.

Accidental Hero is Frears' tenth theatrical offering. He was born in 1941 in the nowhere-ville of Leicester, birthplace also of Joe Orton. His father was an oft-absent accountant ►

ACCIDENTAL AUTEUR

Like 'The Grifters' and 'Prick Up Your Ears', the new big studio film 'Accidental Hero' is a Stephen Frears film. But what is a Frears film? By James Saynor

◀ turned doctor, his mother a social worker. This crabbed rung of the matter-of-fact middle class seems to have bred a queasiness towards the art of the higher elite, as well as a lifelong aversion to the philistine graspings-from-below of the petty bourgeoisie. Inhibitions set in early; after a withdrawn adolescence, he got to Cambridge, where he studied law alongside John Cleese, then found himself a junior job at the Royal Court in the early 60s.

Amid this solar system of showy talent, Frears felt terrifyingly inadequate, and flunked out. His contacts, though, led to jobs as an assistant to Karel Reisz on the 1966 film *Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment* and on Lindsay Anderson's *If...* (1968). He raised money from the BFI for a short film of his own, *The Burning* (1967), and later entered television, where he worked for the best part of the next 15 years, turning out around 25 single dramas of varying formats until he finally made his name with one that only accidentally became a movie.

Reisz's *Morgan* may be as good a place as any to start to seek the origins of the slippery Frears aesthetic. This ballooning piece of end-of-the-road Free Cinema, about a gesticulating fantasist (David Warner) who disrupts the home of his ex-wife, has a lusty-fragmentary attitude, a quirky sense of comedy, a sharp yet sybaritic camera style and a fondness for unusual optical devices. It also features cross-class collisions, luring violence, characters who toy with politics and sappy-smart one-liners ("Violence has a kind of dignity in a loving man," Warner declares).

Frears' role on the film was no doubt negligible, but in many ways *Morgan* reads like a middle-to-late-period Frears movie *avant la lettre*. Frears' magpie intelligence has gone on to draw from many sources beyond the swinging-London movies of the mid-60s, but something of their odd 'decadent realism' – and of the inner stress that this formulation implies – remains close to the heart of many of the projects he has subsequently chosen.

Before Frears began the cliff climb of forging a reputation as a director of single dramas within the closed world of British television, he directed one ill-fated feature of his own, the 1971 *Gumshoe*. An association with Albert Finney on the film *Charlie Bubbles* (1967) helped get this bizarre pastiche off the ground. Finney played a northern bingo-caller turned fantasist private eye, and the untidily realised movie – luxuriating in drabness, but in a camped-up way that strangely anticipated Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* – was an attempt at intense stylisation which few liked and which seems

to have sent Frears back to the drawing board as a director.

Ensnared by now at the BBC, he found any tendencies towards dilettantism sharply choked off, as he took a daunting apprenticeship at the feet of neo-realist gods like Ken Loach and Tony Garnett. "They somehow laid down the rules along which this game was going to be played, and it was played on a very, very high level of intelligence," a still awestruck Frears told me in 1985. "It was like walking into a lion's den: the people were so much cleverer than people nowadays. You were standing at a big bottleneck, and the scripts just poured in. You could come to the end of a job, and someone would offer you something really decent, really good stuff, to start work on in two weeks' time."

Acting riches

The tradition Frears became immersed in was Loachian naturalism, the unflashy documenting of the downhill social condition. "We were trained to make films that said, 'This is what Britain is like,'" Frears recalled. (Even on the set of *Accidental Hero* he was reportedly pleading with Hoffman, "It has to be simple. You know, people used to think we'd shot our films on the street just as we found them.") This was at some remove from the high-profile pyrotechnics of people like John Boorman, Ken Russell, John Schlesinger or Nicolas Roeg, whose more ostentatious styles Frears might well have followed

had he persevered in the feature-film arena at that time.

His first BBC film was *A Day Out* (1972) by Alan Bennett, the story of a trip to a ruined monastery by a cycling club in the Yorkshire of 1911. Its 'realism' draws on the mannerly observational probings of Renoir and early Truffaut. The film is built around a series of ruminations and niggings among the socially diverse group, shot in misty-morning black and white. "My films aren't photographically flashy, because I come from an arts background as opposed to a photographic one," Frears explained at the time. "I don't know a great deal about what the camera can do." *A Day Out* is made with a deft simplicity that would mark Frears' work until the late 70s, though the film still contains exhilarating travelling shots of the bicyclists barrelling down the lanes, and cautious camera tracks here and there. Frears also tried to reform the BBC's primitive post-production practices, looping much of the dialogue to an extent (and an expense) that stunned insiders.

His quiet success in the 70s was founded on such creative and strategic manoeuvres that belie his self-image today as a scatty journeyman who just waits for things to turn up. Most notably, he revered the writer as the nucleus of each project to an extent greater than even the master, Loach, usually determining that they be present on set – a commitment that continues today. This led to collaborations with many



He's no angel: Dustin Hoffman as sleazebag supreme Bernie Laplante in Stephen Frears' 'Accidental Hero'

top-of-the-milk television-drama scribes of the period: Bennett, Neville Smith (who had penned *Gumshoe*), Tom Stoppard, Christopher Hampton and Peter Prince. Frears worked quickly, but liked to be inspired by the "chaos" of the set, and didn't pre-plan things much in advance. He disliked the electronic studio, and – in common with the director Roland Joffé – cannily learned how to buck the BBC's film-resource system in order to work with the best cinematographers, who were otherwise dealt projects by rotation. He learned how, at a hypocritical British institution like the BBC, you have to "half-lie" to survive – and that those who do are rewarded for it.

Although most of Frears' 70s work looks unassuming, there are aspects of his films that many viewers will still recall vividly today – the bicycling shots in *A Day Out*; the demon fast-bowler disappearing beneath the brow of a hill as he takes his run-up in an adaptation of A. G. Macdonell's *England, Their England* (1973); the refreshing lack of whimsy in Stoppard's rendering of *Three Men in a Boat* (1975), with Tim Curry, Stephen Moore and Michael Palin. Frears had found a way, too, of attracting the country's liveliest performing talent to his work, and of casting them imaginatively. Norman Wisdom was to take the lead as a cancer victim in *Going Gently* (1981); another comic in a straight role was Dave Allen as an estate agent in *One Fine Day*, one of a series of Bennett scripts Frears produced and directed for London Weekend Television in 1978. (These last works perhaps best sum up Frears' clout with actors: they contain almost an embarrassment of acting riches in cameo parts.)

It seems to have been the influence of cinematographers that injected more filmic spring into his output in the latter half of the 70s, causing heady new blooms of 'style' to sprout on a sturdy realist stem. He had been honoured to work with one of Loach's legendary lensmen, Brian Tufano, though on Bennett's plaintive retirement saga, *Sunset Across the Bay* (1975), the camera style was still static and 'classical'. But when Frears and Tufano collaborated on Peter Prince's *Playthings* (1976) – a short, sharp story of urban delinquency featuring Jonathan Pryce – more razzmatazz stuff was going down. *Playthings*, Frears said, was shot "fast and rather giddily". Reviewed today, it has a deliciously twisted verve.

Nat Crosby, who lensed Roland Joffé's groundbreaking *The Spongers* (1978), and the Storaro-influenced Chris Menges, keen on daringly low light levels, were two cameramen equally influential in assaulting television's

'institutional modes of representation' at this time. Despite the grim subject matter – terminally-ill hospital patients – Crosby and Frears decided to shoot the BBC's *Going Gently* in a heightened, thrillerish way, with *Spongers*-like long, complex takes. Broad, shiny hospital floors enabled the development of elaborate corridor tracking shots that would later become a Frears trademark. Crosby believed that "every scene has only one, perfect angle", and Frears' work today is always distinguished by beautifully balanced *mise en scène* – colour, line and mass distributed with great care.

New radicalism

Menges, who had shot *Gumshoe*, was in place for Frears' third effort to reach the big screen, Black Lion Films' *Bloody Kids* (1979, released theatrically in 1983). Frears had been impressed by the visual elan of movies like Scorsese's *New York, New York* (1977), shot by Laszlo Kovacs: it was "so stunning, evocative, moving". He had the urge to rebel against the classical, realist mode, but felt "inhibited" about letting the camera go waltz-about independent of the actors. *Bloody Kids*, though, was a great loosener – a highly fevered piece of social commentary from the pen of Stephen Poliakoff about young drop-outs rampaging through the night-time public spaces of Southend: feral, elliptical, headlong and pulse-lit. It started with a vivid car crash and ended with a hospital descending into anarchy. It marked the beginning of



Creating a coup: television journalist Geena Davis, top, and man-of-the-moment Andy Garcia, above, both in 'Accidental Hero'

Frears' mature work: he was becoming, if not an auteur, at least a réalisateur-with-demons.

When *The Hit* came out in 1984, critic Philip Strick posited some cautious auteurism regarding the film's producer, Jeremy Thomas. (*Eureka* and *Merry Christmas*, *Mr Lawrence* had also been roads to an ambiguous hell, featuring charismatic renegades-cum-martyrs.) But nobody then thought of its director, Frears, as a filmmaker with much of a mission – though his craftsmanship was highly prized.

The Hit, scripted by Peter Prince, is an execution movie in which two assassins (John Hurt's deracinated psycho and Tim Roth's wanton pistol-punk) transport a traitorous associate (the unnervingly seraphic Terence Stamp) across Spain to his death. All three are playing a game of chicken with mortality, and the movie is structured around a series of action/repose elements – much like flamenco – as the figures crawl and scrap in a barren, vaguely Fordian landscape. From today's perspective, it's clear that the off-kilter violence, zig-zag pace, 'fascinating' sociopaths and uneasy air of moral relativism make *The Hit* as much of a quintessential Stephen Frears movie as a Jeremy Thomas one.

In his films, Frears was agreeing by 1985, "there is a kind of intensity... It's sort of uncontrollable – it just bursts out in some terrible way. I wish I could control it, but I can't." This newly volcanic style had served him poorly on the overwrought Channel 4 disability drama *Walter* (1982), and only ambiguously well on *The Hit*. But with *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) Frears' new-found "audaciousness", as he called it, reteamed with the old social-realist grounding to fine effect.

The arrival of Hanif Kureishi's screenplay on his doormat energised Frears with a new political radicalism. The Thatcher years had put the values of the mean-minded lower-middle classes in the ascendant, and Frears was ready to give them a drubbing. Reading his comments from this time, you get the sense that his much-publicised anti-Thatcher crusades of the late 80s were less intellectually based and more the product of a kind of class phobia towards shopkeeper attitudes. In any case, *My Beautiful Laundrette* certainly wasn't designed as an 'ethnic' film, any more than the later *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987), an Alan Bennett script about Joe Orton, was intended as a 'gay' movie.

Kureishi, quoted last year in *Vogue*, noted Frears' role: "He would always encourage me to find material in myself and be courageous and uninhibited. He liberated me as a writer and, in a sense, changed my life." The closeness of ►

◀ this collaboration – which continued on their follow-up effort, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) – tends to undermine Frears' frequent assertions that he can only work to other people's hard-baked texts, and that he doesn't buy into the notion of any "director's input" at the screenplay stage.

Looking west

Channel 4's *My Beautiful Laundrette* was shot cheaply for the small screen (by Oliver Stapleton, who has been Frears' most regular cinematographer since), and its theatricalisation was a source of unease for the director. Its scenario is sinuous, but its visual style has an urchin directness, for all the screenplay's occasional nods towards a Rushdie-ish magical realism, and for all the proliferation of actorly business taking place at the sides of the frame. Two images endure, though – a giant crane shot taking us 180 degrees over the roof of a building (the result of an elaborate piece of equipment arriving on the location on the wrong day); and the shot of Daniel Day-Lewis and Gordon Warneke illicitly making out in the laundrette's back office while Warneke's uncle (Saeed Jaffrey) and his moll (Shirley Anne Field) are seen waltzing decorously amid the washing-machines through a cinema-shaped one-way mirror.

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid took this latter idea a stage further with its famous longways split screen of three couples engaged in simultane-

ous horizontal mambo. Billed as "by" Hanif Kureishi, this was nevertheless a full-blown movie, part funded from American sources, and in this second enquiry into polymorphous behaviour patterns in the London of the 'half-lie', the bricolage around the edges threatened to swamp the entire film. The ghetto was even more provocatively eroticised, as the swirling, spray-painted narrative cluttered up with all manner of verbal and visual motto-making. As in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, though, the need for reconciliation had pressed itself on the characters with an unlikely urgency by the close.

These two films caught the attention of Martin Scorsese, but before Frears could make his first move to America for the Scorsese-produced *The Grifters*, Christopher Hampton had suggested that Frears should helm *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) – a handy, off-Hollywood project for a director by now looking west but chary of tangling with the American majors with their lax attitudes towards writers. Frears himself was keen on using US actors for Hampton's script of sexual gladiatorism in pre-revolutionary France, and shot the film tight in on the talk and the performances. Time and space pressures are accordingly handled with control absent from much of Frears' other work, though the movie has a typically gulped ending (which, frankly, is better realised in Milos Forman's otherwise dull version of the same story, *Valmont*, 1989).

In the late 70s Frears had expressed a yen to do American-style thrillers, but wondered how this could be managed in the literary style he preferred: "I just can't imagine bringing all the elements together." *The Grifters* (1990) finally seemed to offer a solution, as Jim Thompson's dime-store Greek tragedy was turned into a tense-but-talky film noir update by Frears and screenwriter Donald Westlake. The concerns of Frears' movies of the 80s with sex and untruth (or lying and lying) reached some sort of blood-suffused summation in this saga of three con-artists (excellently played by Anjelica Huston, John Cusack and Annette Bening) upended by their own sleight-of-hand psychologies.

Though nominally set on the west coast in the present, *The Grifters* is visualised in a timeless La-La Land (with no automobiles younger than 1975 models), a look reminiscent of a David Lynch movie – though, as Frears noted, "where Lynch celebrates [this], I try to conceal it." And it is Frears' tactics of concealment, of shoe-shuffling subversion and veiled referencing – not to mention occasional, good old British wind-uppery – that usually make his films too ingrowing ever to sit easily in the

commercial mainstream (though *Dangerous Liaisons* did blockbusterish business).

Projects carry bewildering baggages of old-movie influences. *My Beautiful Laundrette* was at one stage going to be like a British *Godfather*, then Frears decided to borrow, variously, from Minnelli and *Rebel Without a Cause*. *Double Indemnity* was a subtext for *Dangerous Liaisons*. The narrative structure of *Prick Up Your Ears* was inspired by *All About Eve*. *Bullitt* was an improbable early template for *Gumshoe*. "It is," Frears has said, "like living in a junk shop." It's a junk shop of in-jokes and inhibitions – about film history, about Englishness and Americana, and about character contrasts between the withdrawn and the dangerously bewitching – that often remain highly ironised and criss-crossed.

A mixed-up Briton

The Frearsian blend of reserve and expressionism remains a puzzling, *Alice in Wonderland* commodity. At one time, Frears has said: "My rebellion against Britishness seems to dictate a lot of my actions... [The British] are repressive, small-minded and insular." At another: "I'm very happy with my repression. It's gotten me this far, thank you." He's a walking film encyclopedia who "always gets embarrassed when people use phrases like *film noir*." He's fascinated by American cinema but repelled by its "clichés and B-movie lines." He's a thorn-in-the-establishment leftist who claims: "I always find that whatever I say, I could say the opposite."

From the hideously bloated and difficult *Accidental Hero* (during which the director was hospitalised for a time with a heart complaint), Frears has recently retreated back to British television and *The Snapper*, a BBC adaptation of Roddy Doyle's Dublin bicker-fest, due to be screened in April. Essentially, Frears is part of the adaptable, and arguably rather bland line-up of British craftsmen directors who emerged from the BBC or advertising in the wake of Free Cinema in the 60s and 70s. But he's among the most interesting of them because of his unerring nose for literate scripts and dynamic performances, and because his attitudes are more pungent than your average Alan Parker or Ridley Scott, for all that he may fall a little behind in technique, and for all that he's not a natural storyteller. He may be unique in world cinema in believing in faithful naturalism from a vantage point of abject incredulity. It adds up to a patented kind of post-realism that probably only a mixed-up Briton could bring to the screen.

'Accidental Hero' opens on 16 April and is reviewed on page 42 of this issue

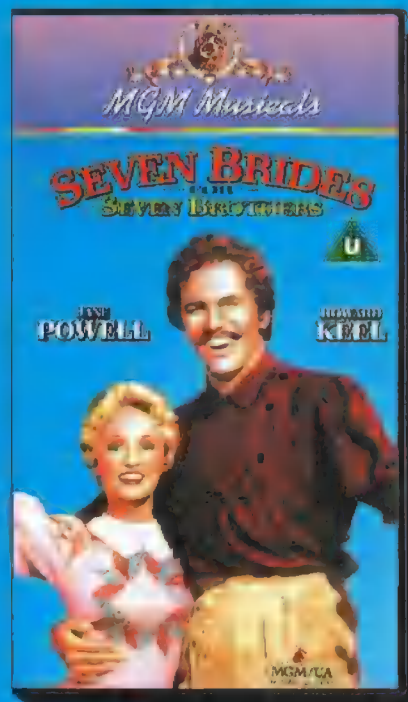


Men in trouble: Albert Finney as the fantasist private eye in 'Gumshoe', top; John Hurt as a deracinated psycho in 'The Hit', above



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With the Ronettes and the Stones, the soundtrack of 'Mean Streets' said goodbye to the 60s. By Ian Penman

JUKE BOX AND JOHNNY BOY

● The pop-up shoot-down soundtrack of Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* is the musical equivalent of a jump cut – spliced-in gunshots and exclamation marks and double takes of music cut to the rhythm of an unpredictable psychopathology, the juke-box mantra of rock/pop music echoing the movie's mood and fist swings. *Mean Streets* deals with characters – Charlie, Johnny Boy, Tony and Michael – who are no longer boys, but not yet men. They're guys: hip, hot-tempered, hubristic. These knights-errant of New York's Little Italy are into small-time heists and short-term pleasures; their articulation is clipped, staccato, wired, and so is their music. Juke-box and Johnny Boy – they're both fragmentation bombs just waiting to go off.

The music that intermittently grabs and rattles the film (Charlie's head hitting his pillow to the opening drumbeats of the Ronettes' 'Be My Baby', Johnny Boy swaggering into Tony's joint on the crest of the Stones' 'Jumpin' Jack Flash') isn't a discrete key-note, but one of several elements exciting the frame – flailing violence and delicate gesture, speech and camera rhythms, obscenity and prayer – which mark the film's unrelenting pulsion. It's as if music is released into the air by breaking glasses or moving bodies. It was smart to base large parts of the film around a juke-box (in Tony's bar/club), but more than that, the music works like a juke-box: apparently random bursts of three-minute economy rock/pop which sound just right, but never entirely pre-programmed.

The feel is very much darkness at the edge of the 70s: a shadier, slicker, shriller city aesthetic than the currently revived/received notion of that time of tacky innocence; or the easier option, then in vogue, of straight rock 'n' roll revival (Sha Na Na, *American Graffiti*, the *Crusin'* compilations). Very Nik Cohn, very Cuban heels; an Italian-jewboy hipster axis (like England's Mods, heavily in debt to black culture) rather than the WASPy wisps of Woodstock. The predominant sound is urban soul: Spector, Stones, Motown, classic doo wop, and hep fingerclinkin' R'n'B like Johnny Ace and the appositely named Little Caesar and The Romans. Unlike our latterday commissioned rock soundtrack – the CD-lush slow choker (Bryan Adams, Whitney Houston, Annie Lennox being the latest) – this music screams back to mono!

Mean Streets taps into the same on-the-ledge malevolence, pervasive malignancy, as that identified by Joan Didion is her essay 'The White Album'. It could be heard in the music of the time across the dilapidated angst of The

Plastic Ono Band, The Doors, the junk-vexed US-indexed Stones of *Sticky Fingers* and *Exile On Main St.* With Janis, Jimi and Brian Jones all RIPped; Jim Morrison and Presley expanding into their own entropic decline; and Lennon, Clapton, Keith Richards and others all temporarily junk-shrouded, the 60s were definitely over. Scorsese may not have been the only one to notice this mood (a new noir will emerge in cinema, heralded by Paul Schrader's 1971 *Notes on Film Noir*), but he was one of the few to capture it; and *Mean Streets* is far bleaker – about the disappearing supports of a 'youth' culture – than anything before or after it (at least until the 1986 *River's Edge*, which bears some comparison). This does not make *Mean Streets* a Watergate film, but it does make it a more authentic rock film than *Woodstock* or *Easy Rider*, or any of the other misfires which always turn up in rock press logs of rock in cinema.

Easy Rider is the paradigmatic rock-studded movie; the songs set up a parallel narrative track, with no bumps or detours, simply keeping the characters on their linear way. *Mean Streets* is the anti-road movie. Pinned into their plush red maze, these guys are all flying centrifugal gestural movement – as opposed to the glazed zombie-hippies, the cruising wounded of *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971), *Easy Rider* (1969), *Five Easy Pieces* (1970). In *Mean Streets* pleasure isn't a utopian project, a Reichian deliberation. Music doesn't equate with liberation – the juke-box rhythms are a claustro-strobic pile-up. (Like a real night out, the music swings between clarity and mush, in and out of focus, as clear or tight as you are over the course of the night.)

In the trajectory that stretches from the hope of *Woodstock* (1970) to the reunion of *The Last Waltz* (1978), music is life, not a mere backdrop. By the time of *The Last Waltz*, we can perceive the first signs of a self-referential culture where to be recognised as a member is enough to earn you a round of whoops and handclaps. *The Last Waltz* is the sort of superstar schmooze – breaking bread rather than breaking heads – that a "punk kid" like Johnny Boy would hate. It is rock as grand narrative, a rock of ages, assembly rather than dissolution – the music is uniformly sturdy, worthy, rooted, historically respectful – whereas the culture of *Mean Streets* operates at a molecular level of collision, speed, exorbitance, severe shudders of perspective, sudden drops into gallows' humour.

Mean Streets conveys that rather than humanistic values like solidarity and progress, the essence of teen spirit is a fly-by-night nihilism, built on excessive ups and diabolical downs. The siren-lure of rock is seductive because of its



The sound of music: Robert De Niro, breaking out all over

flaws, cathartic because it borders on nonsense; utterly frivolous, but with an undertow of resentment, violence, chemical redemption and other unacknowledged weights. It's about (as Charlie puts it) "doing it in the streets" rather than "making up for it in church" or on the couch.

There's a compulsion towards black culture here which manifests itself in lines of attraction and repulsion, as something which either way cannot be acknowledged or assimilated. Blackness echoes on the edges of Boystown: glances, jokes, liminal desires all try to negotiate an alien strain which is in every sense infectious. Black music, and especially doo wop, predominates. Everyone remembers 'Rubber Biscuit' by The Chips (behind Charlie weaving drunkenly through a Viet vet's homecoming party); a short, gaudy, runaway burst of layered male surrealism. Elsewhere, the statelier doo wop and slower soul numbers say everything the boys cannot: simple desires simply expressed, bordering on hymn-like effusion.

Doo wop is an interesting cross-cultural idiom. Originally – but not organically – black, but open to infusions of barbershop or girl group or high-school Italian: like the best pop idioms it is both transient and potentially timeless, embracing a harmony that is at times almost hymnal. (Historically, a lot of early 60s black music was a revamp of Gospel, with the unbearable pangs of teen love standing in for the body of Christ: thus making it – Lord knows – ideal for Scorsese.) In *Mean Streets*, doo wop is a heavenly chorus, the redemptive flip side to more demoniac sounds (which are in themselves white, 'debased' versions of black culture: the Stones, Eric Clapton).

Mean Streets is far 'blacker' than the jazz-

anchored *New York, New York* (1977) in capturing the sense of musical resonance as something daily and tenuously lived. The boys live in the midst of a rich patchwork culture, but are in every sense abusive of it. In the middle of a capital city, they can't get their compound tight enough: Chinese, Jews, blacks, gays all stray in from their own encampments and are swiftly ejected. The frontier of their beloved John Wayne has narrowed to nought, to a ghetto knot. Still linking them to *The Searchers* is a edginess about blood, blood's purity, about keeping it in the clan.

This culture is shown as gleefully paranoiac, ritualistic – but so is the culture it has replaced (embodied by Charlie's Uncle Giovanni, a Mafia higher-up). Both reduce the world to a set of empty flourishes. These are parallel worlds warped by a common insularity which goes right down into the blood. (A subplot about the mingling of inter-familial blood – Charlie's dating of Johnny Boy's sister Teresa – is at the heart, as it were, of the film.) Every pleasure is limned by an extra heartbeat of excess, of potential wounding and loss. These are worlds so insular that half the time they don't even understand each other's jokes or references or pleasures. All they can be sure of is a world of reflections (mirrors, clothes) and inchoate deals, and even here they fall out among themselves: neither youth nor ethnic culture can bind them together.

Mean Streets is brilliant on the recitative babble of male friendship (Cassavetes being the fatherly progenitor here). Just as the mode of address of the pop song is an ideal and generalised 'You', so the speech here is ceaselessly

(and often pointlessly) interrogative, maintaining a rhythm which pushes the film forward and never sounds as stagey as a David Mamet.

Scorsese understands that the dialogue we most often remember (from this sort of movie) tends to be non-sequitur snatches – tenuous, febrile, street-rhetorical. The most repeated line from *Mean Streets*, and perhaps one of the most repeated pieces of dumb rhetoric in the movies, is: "What's a mook?" (Along with that other prize Scorsese/De Niro split-rhetorical interrogative: "You talkin' to me?"). Dialogue continually jumps into this interrogative mode, answering questions with further questions, setting up a rhythm in which nothing is ever settled, or agreed, or, in a sense, ever really said.

This badmouth vernacular is percussive, like Lenny Bruce hijacking jazz inflection and bebop skim. Johnny Boy's first appearance in the film introduces him not through dialogue but a big BOOM! – a too-literal outburst, when he pops a cherrybomb into a post-box (thus immediately wrecking the sturdy supports of the US mail/male). Johnny Boy's taunting rictus, his penultimate abuse of Michael – self-assertion as self-annihilation – have become as fixed in (NYC) subcultural iconography as Lou Reed's sneer or The New York Dolls' flounce or Johnny Thunder's nod.

He enters to 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' and exits to 'Hideaway'. (The former is a good choice, because if Johnny did listen to anything you can imagine it might be this, loud... or maybe 'Sympathy for the Devil'). Johnny Boy is not a man who lives by some code; he's like a Graham Greene character waiting for the code to pun-

ish him; he wants to be goosed by some great nothing he doesn't comprehend. The music slinks around the shadow motivations in the film, like knife blades in a street tango. Johnny moves like he is already caught in a hail of bullets. Whereas the others have business, women, or a pet tiger as sublimation, this Boy has no object, no other: he is pure untrammelled id, doing its inexorable dance. His only moment of calm is when Scorsese slows him down for the famous entry into Tony's bar.

It's almost as if De Niro carries the music around with him (in his hips, head, angles, jerky movements, gumchewing). When Johnny does his geek-dance around a waiting car to 'Mickey's Monkey' (on the face of it, an innocuous bop-soul number from Smokey Robinson and The Miracles) he's revelling in impending destruction, literally dancin' with Mr D: the mix of narrative (Johnny owes Michael/Mickey a swiftly mounting debt) and music is nowhere so volatile. It's almost as if the freedom promised by such music encourages Johnny to overstep the mark. It is all about a motion which is bottlenecked, fatally compromised by either hesitancy and deferral, or a compulsive lack of control. The rhythm of Scorsese's camera sets up a pulse of coming-going/leaving-staying; there is a carefully organised – but loosely applied – grammar of camera push-and-pull between Charlie and Johnny Boy.

We've come to expect an operatic Mafia scene from the cinema, a slow unfurling dynastic design; but these streets are all hypertrophic movement, pettiness and scuffle. This is as unpretentious as street opera gets: it works in a way which more deliberated attempts at youth odyssey – Walter Hill's *Streets of Fire*, *Absolute Beginners* and so on – never could. Imitations or intimations of opera in the movies usually result in a supremely curdled bourgeois triumphalism, which, in turn, is only ever enjoyed by curdled bourgeois critics with insipid literary/erotic tastes. *Mean Streets* is a film given over to the passionate delusions of the voice; in its own way, it's as operatic as cinema gets: a *Beggar's* face-off, a *sharkskin Bohème* of blood, secrecy, quasi-incest, crime and obligation.

But music remains the background rather than the grail of this parable. Scorsese does the right thing: he shows that music is now a soundtrack, and nothing more, for these "crazy, mixed-up" kids. It may have become a substitute religion, but it is no more capable of healing their wounds than the original was. *Mean Streets*' has recently been re-released.

The re-release is reviewed on page 64 of this issue

IN THE MEAN TIME...

1. Let's not forget the Italian component: not just the occasional aria, but the little brass band which has a quasi-Brechtian role, wandering in and out of the celebrations for the Feast of Gennaro. It's a necessary counterpoint, describing its own eccentric parabola. These old guys and their wheezy pomp (they do a blaring, heavily symbolic 'Stars and Stripes') are who Charlie's boys would have been in another lifetime. (Charlie, for one, might still end up there.)

2. For anyone wishing to trace the connections, the missing dark star in the firmament here – as in many others over the years – is Kenneth Anger. In films like *'Kustom Kar Kommandoes'*, Anger matched homoerotic visual

hardness with equivocally 'soft' music. It's one of the lessons that Scorsese has learnt well.

3. Scorsese was employed – as montage supervisor – on 'Woodstock'; as he was on the slightly less epochal (but more watchable) 'Elvis On Tour'.

4. Take a look at the music for 'Who's That Knocking at My Door' (1969), which is, in every way, the predecessor of 'Mean Streets'. The Chantells, The Bellnotes, The Genies, The Chantells – as well as Junior Walker and The Doors. Take a look also at James Toback's 'Fingers' (1978), which is like a diagrammatic explication of the tensions which hold 'Mean Streets' together: Harvey Keitel has a gangster father and a concert-pianist mother, and tries to emulate both, at the same time. It makes for cod-Freudian psychology, but a cool schizo soundtrack.

5. We see the boys at the cinema watching 'The Searchers', and the clip features – what else? – an adolescent scuffle.

6. See also: Nick Tosches' recent biography of Dean Martin, 'Dino', for the narrative of how Italian boys, suspended between a solid rural past of assured ethnic identity and their urban now, stripped of the paternal law of custom and obligations, find that their duty fragments into questions of taste and style, and everything becomes relative, be it shirtcollar length, ethics, juke-box choices or sexuality.

7. The lessons of 'Mean Streets', if we can put it that way, have been learnt by film-makers as diverse as Kathryn Bigelow (especially in 'Near Dark' and 'Point Break') Gus Van Sant, Abel Ferrara, and too-numerous examples in the new queer and black cinemas... and, of course, by Quentin Tarantino.

By Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

● The word is out. Federico Fellini is the directors' director *par excellence*, topping the recent *Sight and Sound* directors' poll by a short head from Orson Welles. And it's not hard to see why film-makers should like his work. No commercial film director makes films with such freedom, or such a sense of freedom even when working under constraint. Fellini is therefore above all enviable – enviable because he can go and make a film like *8½* without a script or budget, but enviable also because he seems to have gifts of expressivity and self-expression that emerge regardless of circumstance and with such directness that invention seems to flow spontaneously into realisation. Not only do Fellini's films stem from himself in this apparently unmediated way, but he also makes them about himself and appears in them as himself. And finally, he makes films about film-making (which in his case is not unconnected to making films about himself). These are not necessarily the best or the most realistic films made about the cinema, but they have a unique brilliance as films about creativity – what makes it flow and what, materially or psychologically, holds it up.

One thing that holds up creativity in the cinema is critics. That is why the critic Daumier in *8½* has to be got rid of. And it is also perhaps why Fellini no longer appears among the top ten in *Sight and Sound*'s parallel critics' poll. Critics are, or have become, suspicious of creativity and of the ideology of the artist and self-expression inherited from Romanticism. They are happy for artists to be naive, or ironic, or to have internalised their own critical superego,

but the sheer splurge of self-expression which seems to mark Fellini's work is no longer fashionable. Fellini started to go out of fashion in the 70s, a time of modernist rigour and resolute anti-sentimentality. Godard was at his most arid, but was still preferred to Truffaut; Antonioni made few films but was admired (though excoriated in the United States for the embarrassingly perceptive *Zabriskie Point*). Fellini churned them out but to critical neglect. Only the enduring popularity of *8½* (much loved in spite of the fate of the unfortunate Daumier) enabled the director Fellini to scrape into the critics' top ten in 1982.

Personally, I have always had difficulties in appreciating Fellini. I admire his invention, his mastery of expressive detail. I find the films often charming, but the charm can easily pall, and the very fact that the films work by charm seems to me suspect. It has always been a great strength of the movies that they are enjoyable

in an impersonal way: directors can be distinctive but are rarely obtrusive in the way certain writers – and even more, certain television 'personalities' – are obtrusive. Fellini breaks the tacit compact, deep-rooted in popular cinema, that while directors may be admired for what they do, it is only the characters on screen (and the actors who play them) who are loved or hated for who they are.

Of course there are other examples of obtrusive directors in popular cinema. They tend to be performers who have taken to direction (like Chaplin), or directors who appear in their own movies (like Hitchcock), or unclassifiable figures like Welles. And as these examples suggest, they also tend to be cases on the messy borderline between commercial cinema and cinema as art. A sense of directorial presence is often taken (rightly or wrongly) to signify that a film belongs on the 'art' side of the divide, and what is generally called art cinema contains plenty of examples of films in which a directorial personality is sprawled large upon the celluloid. So should we just accept that Fellini is one of those directors who is allowed to obtrude because he operates in a genre where an opposite compact applies and being obtrusive is part of the game? Certainly attempts have been made to define art cinema as a genre, and directorial obtrusiveness – along with plots that go nowhere and alienated heroes – could be listed as a determining characteristic of such a genre.

Such a conclusion seems to me doubly suspect. First, art cinema cannot be distinguished in an abstract and systematic way from the rest of cinema, and second, even if it could, any division that separated art and popular cinema and put Fellini on the side of art would do him –



AND POPULAR CULTURE

L I N E

and his art – a grave injustice. The idea of an endemic conflict in cinema between something called art and something else called commerce or industry or entertainment or popular culture is almost as old as cinema itself. But the conflict has taken so many forms and been so over-determined by other questions, and the terms of the opposition have varied so much over time, that one has to ask whether one is really dealing with the same conflict? Art cinema nowadays tends to mean unpopular films in foreign languages (probably state-subsidised) that have been subtitled in English, whether to preserve artistic integrity or because the market is not large enough to justify the cost of dubbing. But this minority and anti-popular emphasis is not present in the notion of film art in the early years of cinema, nor could it have been what Chaplin, Pickford and Fairbanks had in mind when they founded United Artists: as the most popular artists of their generation they simply wanted more control over their product and its marketing; opposing the popular was not part of their aim.

Italian cinema has been a particular victim of the equivocation about the meaning of art cinema. Post-war Italian films were all popular in intention, aimed at a mass audience and distributed on the commercial circuit. Some were popular at the box office, some not – but the same could be said of Hollywood films today. The equivocation began because neo-realist films in particular became popular on the art-house circuits abroad, while enjoying mixed fortunes at home. Some, like Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*), were enormously successful both domestically and abroad, particularly in the US. But Visconti's *La terra trema*,



which could indeed be classified as an art film and was revered by the critics, didn't even get a circuit release in Italy in its original form, since the distributors calculated that a three-hour epic without name actors and spoken in dialect was unlikely to find favour with a public accustomed to stars and dubbing into standard Italian. As if to prove their point, Giuseppe De Santis' *Riso amaro* (*Bitter Rice*), a proletarian drama starring Raf Vallone and the fleshy newcomer Silvana Mangano, did hugely well while being sniffed at by the critics. And De Sica's *Umberto D* was a box-office disaster whose failure with the mass audience signalled the end of neo-realism as a movement.

Federico Fellini started his directing career just as the star of neo-realism was beginning to

wane. He was a journalist, caricaturist and scriptwriter, from a middle-class provincial background. Unlike Visconti, with his connections to the Parisian artistic *beau monde* on the one side and the Communist Party on the other, Fellini was ordinary. He grew up under ordinary fascism, Italian-style, a world of petty pomp and regimented mediocrity from which there was only one escape – to go to the movies. The movies were not fascist. Newsreels were, of course, but the feature-film industry, though protected economically, was very little interfered with culturally or politically. The main thing Italian feature films had to do was compete with Hollywood, which had generously agreed to limit its imports into Italy to 250 films per year, or five per week.

Fellini's is not the only testimony to the liberatory power of American movies and popular culture in general in a country whose own official culture had been bled of most of its vital strength. Nor was he the only person to experience political liberation in 1944/5 as an opportunity to heal a cultural split between oppressive reality and liberatory fantasy. But whereas many of his contemporaries, around 1945, turned to the native realist tradition for inspiration (and also to the American novel and to various models of European modernism), Fellini showed little interest in either realism or high culture. His difference from his contemporaries was not immediately apparent (except perhaps in his relative reluctance to sign any political petition from the 'world of culture' that happened to be going the rounds). It emerged gradually.

Unlike De Sica, who had fought a principled battle not to have an American actor ►



◀ imposed in the role of the hero of *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*), Fellini happily took on Anthony Quinn for *La strada* in 1954 and Broderick Crawford and Richard Basehart for *Il bidone* in 1955. He also showed an increasing penchant for caricature and the grotesque, particularly in his portrayal of women. It would be wrong to say that all Fellini's women are caricatures and nothing but. The roles played by Giulietta Masina (Fellini's wife) are gentle caricatures but also character roles. But most of the women who inhabit Fellini's films are fantasies. They are not rounded characters and their creation is very unliterary. It is hard to imagine any actress taking home the script, studying the role and coming back on the set with an interpretation of the character. Rather, the character seems to stem Athena-like from the director's head, in a form that is at the same time extremely personal and extremely stereotypical.

The sources of Fellini's imagery are not hard to find. Of course they are in his head, in the sense of being an activation of his own fantasy, but they are also deeply embedded in popular culture and popular memory. His adolescent and pre-adolescent dreams of women are not unique – though he is uniquely good at reworking them and giving them form. And the forms into which these fantasies are poured are those of caricature, cartoons, comic books, variety shows and school-book illustration: what is Fellini's *Satyricon* if not a remembered image of fourth-form Roman history, over which priapic dwarfs and other grotesques have been scrawled like graffiti?

The forms with which Fellini has chosen to work are not large-scale narrative forms. Fellini is a sketchwriter or raconteur; he is not an architect of all-embracing narratives. *Lo sceicco*

bianco (*The White Sheik*, 1951), his first film as sole director, is practically the only one to have anything like a classical, three-act play construction. And by narrative criteria, *La dolce vita* (1960) is aimless and seemingly endless (though this never stopped it from being hugely popular). From 81 onwards, Fellini is able to turn this weakness to advantage, abandoning all pretence of the novelistic and the omniscient narrator and casting himself instead in the equally traditional but less orthodox roles of compere, presenter or ringmaster, or even of the storyteller who has forgotten the story.

The forms on which Fellini draws and to which he remains attached are also for the most part regressive. The film which Guido cannot make in 81 is science fiction, modern and geared to the future. Instead, Guido turns back to the past and assembles his memories. Fellini has a decided antipathy towards television, but loves and has frequently evoked the fading or marginal worlds of photo-romances, travelling variety and circus. Movies, particularly Hollywood, were a powerful influence in his early formation, but not only does he take nothing from them in terms of narrative construction, he also makes little positive use of them as an icon of modernity. They are evoked instead as faded remembered images, like the lost world of *Ginger and Fred*: remnants of a time before mass culture in the form of television swept across Italy in a vast homogenising wave.

The pull exerted on Fellini by the past can be seen as a nostalgia for childhood or adolescence, a time when reality may have been oppressive but dreams were free. But it can also be seen as a nostalgia for a popular culture which was that of a collectivity – the parade, the *festa*, the coming of the circus, the movies, even the comic books or risqué novels that

were passed from hand to hand. Such a notion of culture as community located in the past is always mythical: look at John Ford's Westerns. But it is powerful and it accounts, I think, for much of Fellini's popularity with many types of audience.

Here is a director whose work has many of the trappings, one might think, of modernism or even post-modernism – disjointed and heroless narratives, the foregrounding of the cinematic apparatus, play with illusion, Chinese-box construction. But these devices are a mere shadow-play. They have a serious look to them, but they hold no terror. There is none of the anguish of modernity such as one finds in Rivette, Godard, Wenders or Antonioni. On the contrary, they are almost reassuring: their function is to say to the audience, "You know, and I know, that the lost world is lost, but somehow we will get back there: Guido will get his story together; Marcello will find his angel even if he cannot talk with her." And what of the lost world? It is basically a good world, not because nothing particularly awful happens in it (though nothing much does, apart from the death of Gelsomina in *La strada*), but rather because it is composed of good images, images drawn from all those good things that the ordinary world used to be full of but which are fast disappearing from our culture.

What is at issue here is not so much Fellini's nostalgia as ours. Not all Fellini's films are nostalgic, but enough of them are for his entire oeuvre to be readable (and sometimes misreadable) in a nostalgic key. *Prova d'orchestra* (1978) is not a nostalgic film, nor were films like *La strada* at the time of their release. But the continuing appeal of Fellini's films relies at least in part on a desire to go back from now to then and from the experience of now to the memory of then. Embracing Fellini's world is also a way of embracing something rooted and regional – almost all his work rotates on an axis from Rimini to Rome – and of turning away from the levelling aspects of modernity.

When *Ginger e Fred* (*Ginger and Fred*, 1986) was shown on Italian television recently alarm bells were rung in the newspapers because the ratings for it, though respectable, were lower than for an American-style television show on one of the other channels. To the correspondent of *La Repubblica* it seemed like the beginning of the end for a popular and national culture. I think the alarm was exaggerated – if only because the audience that watched *Ginger and Fred* will at least remember it, whereas the other show will disappear into the realm of the forgotten until a future Fellini emerges to rescue it and reinsert it into memory.

What has been said here does not perhaps do full justice to all Fellini's work – and particularly not to remarkable films like *E la nave va* (1983), whose autonomy of invention escapes the simple schemas I have drawn to account for the director's appeal. Every great artist's work has several lives, interspersed with periods of near-death. But I would be willing to bet that in 2002 Federico Fellini will still be in the charts – for film-makers, critics and the general public alike – though possibly for different films and certainly for different reasons.

Fellini talks about his career, the Marx Brothers and tears. By Anna Muzzarelli

FELLINI IN CONVERSATION

Anna Muzzarelli: In your list of films for the 'Sight and Sound' top ten, you commented that you had selected 'popular' films, because that is the culture you belong to.

Federico Fellini: Cinema doesn't belong only to the great directors; it has other participants who are equally emblematic. I can't help but think of those films from the 20s onwards that had as their primary symbol an actress or actor – in those days, cinema for me was the faces of actors. Garbo's fascination had something judicial about it: an admonition, a mask, a gaze; a hieratic, mortuary attitude, as if a sentence was being passed. In the Italy of the Catholic Church, it was impossible not to be fascinated by a judge, and a woman judge at that – a sort of spectral Athena.

So this company of faces that represented the cinema included Garbo, then Chaplin, or the two together – Garbo the sorceress, the Pythia, and Charlie the tramp, the young rebel, the two of them representing the most contrasting psychologies and desires.

Then there was Stan and Ollie – how grateful we were for that carefree laughter with no purpose behind it, none of the emotional or ideological blackmail of Chaplin. And to conclude, there were the Marx Brothers. Only the other night I came down to the kitchen to fetch a glass of water and the television set was on, and they were showing *Duck Soup*.

I found myself sitting there alone, at 2.30am, wiping tears of laughter from my face with my dressing-gown sleeve. What divine buffoons, what rhythm, what rapid-fire dialogue, the grace of a ballet: three magnificent clowns inserted into the game of the others. To sum up then: Garbo, Chaplin by her side, Stan and Ollie on the other side, and the Marx Brothers dancing round them, incessantly.

Tell us about your taste for caricature, the cartoon-like character that is so present in your work.

If Italy survived the gloom of bourgeois education under those twin castrating authorities – fascism and the Catholic Church – it was thanks to American cinema. American cinema was the great nourishment, it was another life. But even before their cinema, Americans had gained great popularity through their comic strips. An Italian magazine, the *Corriere dei Piccoli*, carried the work of these cartoonists – great artists not only in a graphic sense, but in a literary one as well, because American literature is represented not only by the works of Steinbeck or Faulkner, but by Jiggs and Maggie, Hans and Fritz Katzenjammer, characters who became very popular in Italy. They gave us a feeling of gratitude towards America that helped us to bear the cultural blackmail of the times.

Was this what led you to become a cartoonist?



As a boy I used to spend hours trying to copy those drawings. I always had a tendency to scribble on any white surface – it's a habit I have maintained when I prepare a film, and since I don't have cinematheque memories of the great classics, a film first appears to me through the sketches I make. These enable me to grasp a perspective, the spaces of a setting or the costumes, what face a character should have – indeed, when I start to prepare a new film the first approach is graphic. It's also a way of telling myself that I'm working, that the whole shebang is on the rails. During my first years in Rome I also worked as a caricaturist, to make ends meet: I would go into restaurants and cheekily ask if anyone wanted a caricature.

After making *La dolce vita* there is a two-year interval before the production of '81', a period during which, it is said, it seemed you were going through an expressive crisis.

One should always wish for an expressive crisis, how can you do without it?

'81', then, is the product of this crisis, almost as if it was the only film you could make? What gave you the idea of making a film about making films?

It's difficult enough to remember the films I have made, the motifs even... Anyway, for some time I had had in mind the idea of making the portrait of a man in its many layers: his memories, fantasies, dreams, his everyday life, a character who as yet had no professional or personal identity (at the beginning he wasn't a film director). I wanted to recount the multi-dimensionality of a day, a conscious and an unconscious life unfolding like a spiral, without defining boundaries, abandoning any idea of plot in favour of a free narration, a chat. The idea was to restore the sense of a time where past, present and future,

dreams, memories and desires were blended together.

It was a very ambitious project, so much so that I couldn't express it. Then I went to Chianciano, a spa town, to take a cure, and this environment – its ritual queuing with a glass waiting for health to be restored, the grandiosity of the spa, the purgatorial sense which is always present when a collective of people are united in the same ritual, like a ballet – this brought to me the background for these meditations: a man caught in a moment of suspension in his daily rhythms, there because there is a threat, perhaps an illness.

But I didn't know my character. I had thought of a writer, a lawyer, a journalist: I couldn't make up my mind, and these memories, these meditations without a face were fading into nothing. Perhaps this was the great lesson of 81: at some point I told myself, "get the engine started, get everybody on board, somebody will provide, force other people to make you do something." So I did. I started the construction of the set, put the actors under contract, and the film took off. In the beginning I didn't have a script, only some notes, a scene or two written with Tullio Pinelli and Ennio Flaiano, and my inexhaustible, endless chattering about what I wanted to do. We started to build the scenery of the farmhouse, and after two months of intense work I realised that I didn't know what I wanted. I would go every day to the studios and spend all day in my office, drawing, making calls, but the film was no longer there.

One day I sat at the typewriter and started a letter to the producer: "Dear Rizzoli, this letter will probably interrupt a professional relationship, besides a beautiful friendship: I am sorry you have taken on commitments ▶

◀ to make this film, but I must ask you to suspend everything." While I was writing this letter I heard someone calling me from the set, downstairs; Gasparino, a grip, was inviting me to join a little party in the theatre, where another worker, Bocio, was celebrating his 60th birthday. I left my letter and followed Gasparino down to the set where everybody was gathered and Bocio was pouring wine into paper glasses. I took a glass, wished him happy birthday, and Bocio said, "this film will be wonderful." I felt a traitor, a captain abandoning his crew: I thanked Bocio and instead of going back to my letter went into the garden. I sat on a bench and thought, "I'm a director who doesn't remember what he wanted to do" – and in that moment the film was made: "That's what I'll do. The story of a director who doesn't remember his own film."

A few days later the film laboratories went on strike and everybody wanted to stop shooting since it was impossible to check the rushes, but I said, "No, we'll go ahead." I shot for four months without ever seeing what I'd done, ordering the demolition of expensive constructions to make room for new ones, laying off actors who had finished their part; the cameraman had a nervous breakdown. When shooting was over I spent three days in the projection room to see the work of four months; it was a historical undertaking, that of someone who shoots a film without knowing what he's doing.

The film was born in a spirit of abandonment, of spontaneity, of trust and defiance, a fortunate film that was later so successful as to become a genre – alongside the Western and the detective film, there is the 8½ genre. If there's a lesson I learnt from this experience, it's that everything that happens during the production of a film, be it contradictory, adverse, interruptions, strikes, can all become nourishment for the film.

Weren't you ever worried?
Fear of disaster is very stimulating for me; I adore wrecks, the threat of the end, an end seen as a sign of a new beginning. I don't look for disasters, but I need this threatening atmosphere. The secret of my creativity is very simple: I sign a contract and take an advance, which I know I will never give back, and the threat of ending up in jail or of being totally discredited is the incentive to make a film. Probably I identify with the Renaissance artist who takes a commission from the pope or the prince and if he fails to deliver will be sent to prison or worse.

Which would you prefer, a film that made a lot of money at the box office but wasn't much praised by the critics, or a film that didn't do so well in terms of returns, but was highly critically acclaimed?
Money?... I don't want to appear disinterested or angelic, but I don't really care. I don't think about the result when I make a film, neither the critics' enthusiasm nor the box-office returns – one makes films for oneself, because you have to, apart from that little detail of a contract and an advance. Of course I'm satisfied if the film pleases the most demanding critics while at the same time meeting the favour of audiences. Certainly it's



a goal which is there at the back of my mind, though it's never really present when I work. I don't think anyone in this profession should have any other concern than his ability to be a medium for what he wants to do: those characters, those situations, that confused sentiment between nostalgia, regret, prediction, this undefinable atmosphere which is the oxygen that gives life to colours and characters. That is the only reference point for someone who tries to transform a dream into something concrete and tangible. *Would you say you have roots in neo-realism – and I'm thinking of your collaboration with Rossellini as a screenwriter for 'Paisà' and 'Roma città aperta'?* Rossellini stands out from the rest of the so-called neo-realists for his eye, his intervention as a strong and compassionate witness who knew how to photograph the air around things, and for his disregard of cinema as a spectacle. I took part as a spectator in *Paisà* and *Roma città aperta* and I may have learnt my way of approaching cinema from Rossellini, who worked in the most incredible confusion: expiring bills, romantic complications, conflicts, the war. I remember in Naples, during the shooting of *Paisà*, in the middle of the street, with the allies' tanks parading behind our backs, and there he was, with his beret and the megaphone: the casualness of a god who's creating an earthquake only to be able to photograph it. This is the true lesson that neo-realism taught me.

'La dolce vita' was an enormous success not just in Italy, but in Europe and the US. Did you think at the time that you were making films for an international audience?

No, I don't think so – if I had planned my films in those terms, how could I have made *Amarcord*? I believe that if one has a sincere, authentic and non-speculative vocation to express oneself through painting, literature, music or cinema, one cannot have other concerns than those of sincerity and expressiveness. I always made the films I wanted to make.

I remember that as a boy I didn't know what I wanted to do in life. All my classmates had specific ideas – they wanted to become doctors or lawyers – but I wanted to be a painter, a cartoonist, a journalist, an actor, and in the end I chose a profession that is all these things together. When I'm on the set I'm there 100 per cent. I'm a nuisance: I'm

a carpenter, a tailor, an electrician, I hang pictures on the walls, I put make-up on or advise the make-up artist how to emphasise the expression of a face so it is expressed with more immediacy, more authority. *Do you think you owe something to that Italian popular tradition that inspired Totò's great art?* If you are referring to the *commedia dell'arte*, that mixture of tradition and improvisation, that taking advantage of every situation suggested by the audience or by the bad temper of an actress, I certainly do. Everything I said about Stan and Ollie or the Marx Brothers I can repeat with the same enthusiasm about Totò, with an addition though – the disquieting trait he had of being a messenger from the afterlife, something profoundly Neapolitan, ghostly, a sardonic grin in the face of disaster.

I met Totò for the first time in 1938 when I was working as a journalist in Rome. I had seen him at the theatre and he had moved me, so pretending to be Fred MacMurray, my hat on the back of my head and a pencil behind my ear, I went to his dressing room to interview him. A week later I returned to show him the article and a caricature I had made of him. I worked with him only once, 20 years later on the last day of shooting a film by Rossellini, *Dov'è la Libertà?*. Roberto was ill and the production asked me to finish the film. Everybody called him "Prince", and he was a prince, so I did too. "You," he said, "can call me Antonio." It was like a pontifical investiture.

Many years later I met him again. I believe when I was making 8½ at the Scalera studios. He was almost blind, wearing black sunglasses, and during the break a Neapolitan colleague, Donzelli, took him to that same garden where I had sat down to think about my film. Totò was sitting in the sun, like a little lizard, and I was moved to tears at the sight of this small, emaciated man warming himself in the sun. I approached them and asked Donzelli about Totò's health; he replied that he had lost his sight completely. At the end of the break they went back to the set. I followed them inside, and stood in a corner to watch. The director gave Totò a few instructions on the scene to be shot, somebody took off his sunglasses and put a bowler hat on his head, some of the actors informed him of their positions, the clapper went, and... a miracle. He moved about with the speed of someone who had 100 eyes, even behind his head: he delivered his lines, moved to his spots and when the director said stop, he stopped.

Do you know the story of Pinocchio? When Pinocchio comes into the theatre and Harlequin asks, "Who is over there, is that Pinocchio?", and all the marionettes recognise him and Pinocchio jumps on the stage and dances with them? I would be in exactly the same situation if Totò said to me, "Ohè, Federi!" It seems to me that I have always had a feeling of belonging to a brigade of comic types, and I say this without any romantic or literary complacency: it is my most intimate quality, my inner identity, that of someone who makes spectacle, even during interviews, as you have probably noticed.

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Alison Maclean, director of 'Crush', talks to Lizzie Francke about femmes fatales, divine feuds – and New Zealand

DARK SIDE

● New Zealand director Alison Maclean's debut feature opens with the most primeval of images: a pool of rust, resembling almost blood-coloured sludge, simmers away as the earth heaves with volcanic activity. Suggestively slippery and festering, the opening sequence of *Crush* sucks the audience into a doom-laden world of muddy and inchoate feelings. These are churned over in the film when an American comes to Rotorua, a New Zealand resort town famous for its geo-thermal hot spots, and finds herself spelling trouble for those around her. Starting out like an affable road movie with two best friends driving through a moss-lined landscape sealed by a heavy-lidded sky, the film skids out of control when the reckless outsider Lane crashes the car and then abandons her comatose pal, Christina, for dead. Cracking open a Pandora's Box of infectious passions, *Crush* deals with the panicky horror of guilt and revenge unleashed by this careless act. For as Christina lies in a coma, Lane invades her life and creates havoc.

Maclean is the latest of a new generation of women directors from Australasia marked by similarly skewed visions of the world, particularly when it comes to the traditional female preoccupations of family and friends. The first film in the new wave was Ann Turner's *Celia* (1988), a gothic tale of childhood in which the small heroine confuses reality and her dream world with frightening results. The next year saw Jane Campion's bitter *Sweetie* which undid the ties that bind with its story of "a bit mental" (to quote the film) young woman who plants herself back in her sister's life. These are films that eschew the positive imagism of recent women's cinema for a much darker exploration of female experience. *Crush* could be described as an off-kilter horror film – one that allows for a psychological gouging rather than relying on excessive gore. But more importantly, it is an unsettling and disorienting story that is conspicuously uncanny about female relationships in its attempt to achieve an emotional truth.

"In recent years there haven't been enough films that look at the murky side of women's friendships, it's like some feminist taboo born out of the 'Sisterhood is powerful' idea," explains Maclean. "The cruelty, the jealousy,

the competitiveness, the depth of those feelings at times, they just haven't been dealt with." Admittedly Hollywood has had its pot shot with Barbet Schroeder's *Single White Female*. "I read the script for that film and thought that it was interesting when the room-mate first moves in and gradually starts to encroach on the other woman's territory. I've been in situations like that, where it feels like it is just too close for comfort but at the same time one wants that intimacy. That's what is really disturbing in that story, not the blood bath in the end which is really quite obvious."

Maclean, however, is not afraid of the visceral. She could even be described as having made a habit of dredging the emotional mire to find the most unpleasant things available. Her attention-grabbing short *Kitchen Sink*, made in 1989, is an exorcism of desire and a freaky reworking of the Pygmalion myth couched in the most banal and grungy of domestic chores. As a young woman cleans her sink, she pulls a thick black hair up through the plug hole which proves to be some bizarre umbilical cord with a hirsute homunculus attached to the end. It is hers to breathe life into and to fashion into a demon lover who subsequently proves to have a mind of his own. The film is a rehearsal for *Crush* as both works investigate relationships that are based on a perceived imbalance of power. There is no clear-cut division between victim and victor in *Kitchen Sink*. And the same equivocal relationship exists between Christina and Lane in *Crush*.

Maclean pushes the ambiguities in *Crush*, and nowhere more so than with the character of Lane. "One should have profoundly ambivalent feelings about her. She's like Pabst's Lulu: you are appalled by some of her actions, yet there is also an innocence about her. It is important that the audience should never quite know where they are with her, not quite know her limits." With her dark vampish bob and provocative stance, Lane is a latter-day *femme fatale*. But Maclean argues that she investigates that Hollywood archetype rather than reproducing it. Lane is framed by other women's perceptions, whether those of Christina or of Angela, the gauche and seemingly impressionable daughter of Colin, a writer whom Lane encounters. "The *femme fatale* is traditionally

someone whose sexuality is dangerous, but always as perceived by men. In *Crush*, though Lane has an affair with Colin, there is a sense that she is using him to work out certain things about Christina. It is much more to do with the relationship between these two women than with the man."

Typically, in a climate that still has certain prescriptions about what women directors should be up to, Maclean has come under fire from some for not clarifying exactly what that relationship might be. "I've been asked whether they are lovers but I don't want to spell that out, and I've been told that that's a cop-out. But for me it's exciting to be in a film where you're not sure exactly where you stand. Once you say that they were lovers, you close as many doors as you open. I think it's far more interesting when you are not sure, you are guessing and thinking about it as you watch it. That's what it's like when you meet people in life, the ins and outs of what they are and what their history is. Also, to delineate that relationship would be to deny the more allegorical nature of the film. Lane and Christina are not really fully rounded psychological characters – they come out of nowhere, like an angel and a devil locked in a tussle."

This divine feud is played out in 'God's own country', as New Zealand is still quaintly called. But for Maclean New Zealand is no paradise, and *Crush* is as much an ironical comment on a repressed and conservative Anglo-Saxon culture. "There is a lot of passion and violence in the country, but it is kept buried, particularly the violence which tends to come out only when people get drunk or in certain ritualised ways such as in sport. It's such a buttoned-down country, but one that is also deeply insecure about its identity." That is where the fatal crush comes in, since such an insecurity allows it to succumb easily to the charms of another.

In Maclean's film, the brash American Lane becomes an obvious object of others' infatuation in such a way that the film can almost be read as an allegory of New Zealand's relationship with the US. "Crushes are very intense and often short lived, which means that they can flip the other way round and soon turn into total scorn. New Zealand is constantly borrowing from American culture but at the same



Exiles and lovers: Marcia Gay Harden as Lane, the unsettling woman with whom the world is infatuated in Maclean's debut feature

time there is a complete rejection of it in the rather self-conscious nationalism. The attitude is that we're better than the nasty, corrupt and evil States, yet we can't help being fascinated by the country." Setting *Crush* in the spa resort of Rotorua gives it a further twist. "In one way it is very much a tourist town – the big, wide streets are lined with half-empty international hotels, but it is also a very important Maori area, with a very strong identity. It is quite a spiritual place, but yet as a *pakeha* [the indigenous term for white New Zealanders] you are an outsider, forced into the role of sightseer along with everyone else." *Crush* sheds new light on that particular cultural displacement.

Maclean creates a distinct sense of place, yet also makes it seem very unworldly. But then Rotorua's seething landscape is a god-sent back-

drop for a grotesque melodrama. The brooding mood is further exacerbated by the grey, sunless weather. "I decided to create a wintry look partly because it makes the steam show much more and partly because it makes the colour very saturated. The colours are from the town – dull greens and browns, sulphurous yellows." The style could be described as drab 70s, but Maclean maintains that audiences shouldn't be sure what period they are in. "There should be the sense that you are one step removed from everything, so that you are not quite sure what you feel about it. New Zealand has that kind of ambience, it's a little bit stuck in the past."

As a film-maker developing her craft in New Zealand, Maclean is conscious of being isolated from any particular cinematic tradition. She trained as a sculptor and photographer – there

are no film schools in New Zealand – and her interest in cinema developed out of reading around issues of visual representation. She made her first short film, provocatively titled *Taunt*, as an experiment with the subjective camera. "It was about a man chasing a woman – but they were both played by the same actor, a Maori guy who had very long hair. I was totally into *Screen* at the time and wanted to play with the idea of a female and male point of view. I would read a lot of film theory, but it's a bizarre idea to feel influenced by a film that you haven't seen. It happens a lot out here since you just don't get the opportunity to view them. I would read about some and they would have a tremendous allure, often in ways that they couldn't possibly live up to. I remember when I finally saw *Riddles of the Sphinx* it didn't do a lot for me, but on paper it seemed very profound and exciting."

Film-makers whose work Maclean did have access to and whom she feels markedly influenced by include the mother of the avant-garde, Maya Deren – and certainly the chillingly nightmarish texture of *Meshes of the Afternoon* finds its way into *Crush*. Among her contemporaries, Maclean has called on the experience and advice of Jane Campion. "She has been an important influence, not so much because of her films – which of course I admire and respect – but more because I see what she is doing and her courage as an example."

Maclean finds she is asked a lot about the Australasian new female wave and that it is a phenomenon she can't easily account for. But her own experience points to the importance of a flexible film-funding commission (the New Zealand and Australian film commissions have been behind the films of Campion *et al*) which has shown a consistent interest in her work and was willing to back her feature regardless. "It's government money, so there isn't the same commercial imperative. They wanted to support me as a film-maker and they were willing to go with what I presented to them, even if they did have certain reservations and weren't too sure what they were going to end up with." It was leap of faith that allowed Maclean to plunge into the dark.

'Crush' opens on 19 March and is reviewed on page 44 of this issue



FIRE AND ICE

Catherine Deneuve may signal French chic and 'perverse' sexuality to audiences worldwide. But what does her career reveal about the role of the female star in the cinema and culture of France?

By Ginette Vincendeau

● In French town halls, two icons, one male and one female, symbolise the nation state. One is a photograph of the president, gazing down in a benignly patriarchal, or as the French might put it, avuncular, way (François Mitterrand is often referred to as 'tonton'). The other is a plaster bust of Marianne, the symbol of the French Republic. But whereas the president's identity is self-evident, French mayors have a choice when it comes to Marianne. They can order, among others, the 'traditional' version, a Brigitte Bardot model, or, since October 1985, the Catherine Deneuve model (FF2,908.94 plus tax).

The recent release of *Indochine*, directed by Régis Wargnier, looks set to bring back Deneuve as the top female French star of our time (the film has already won a Golden Globe award and received two Oscar nominations for best foreign film and for Deneuve as best actress). This is noteworthy, because though Deneuve has received many prizes and her star image has shone for three decades, allowing her to command one of the highest salaries for a star in France, her film parts since Truffaut's *Le Dernier métro* (1980) have tended to be acts of symbolic presence rather than actual leads, a little like Marianne in the town halls. This discrepancy between her status and the roles she plays brings up interesting questions about the make-up of Deneuve's star image and the place of women within the French star system.

For an international art-cinema audience, Catherine Deneuve is likely to evoke two things: French chic and 'perverse' sexuality. The first derives from the association of her beauty with prestigious French fashion houses; the second from her performances as the angel-faced schizophrenic murderer of Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965) and as Séverine, the shy bourgeois wife of Buñuel's *Belle de jour* (1967) who spends her afternoons as a prostitute in a discreet and luxurious Parisian brothel.

For French audiences, Deneuve set out in a different mode. After a few small parts with her sister Françoise Dorléac in light comedies such as *Les Collégiennes* (1956, at the age of 14) and *Les Portes claquent* (1960), she began her career proper as Virtue in Vadim's *Le Vice et la vertu* (1960, based on a novel by the Marquis de Sade), in which her bouffant hairstyle reflected Vadim's attempt to clone her, after Annette Stroyberg and before Jane Fonda, on Bardot.

But Deneuve did not pursue the libertine line for long, and her real breakthrough came with a better hairstyle in a better film: *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964), the first of Jacques Demy's sentimental, pastel-coloured musicals with all-sung dialogue. So while internationally Deneuve is associated with Polanski and Buñuel, at home she has paid tribute to the pivotal role of Demy in establishing her career. Against the background of the still repressive sexual mores of early 60s France, while Bardot continued her role as explicit sex goddess and dark-haired New Wave actors such as Anouk Aimée, Anna Karina and Jeanne Moreau embodied 'intellectual' versions of French femininity, Deneuve triumphed as a sexy but innocent blonde, a persona reinforced by two further Demy films, the musical *Les Demoiselles*

de Rochefort (1966) and the costume fairy tale *Peau d'Ane* (1970) as well as by several light comedies such as *La Vie de château* (directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau in 1965).

Messing up her hair

The construction and perception of women's personalities always depend on their looks. And in the case of Deneuve, those looks are defined as much by grooming as by any physical attributes. Her hairstyles, for instance, have consistently been seen as an intrinsic feature of her persona and many writers have talked about changing her image in terms of messing up her hair. Like her hairstyle in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (smoothed back in a neat half ponytail), Deneuve's image in the film is one of smoothness and restraint, a well-behaved middle-class girl (even if in the narrative she becomes pregnant out of wedlock). Unlike a number of prominent female European stars of the 50s and 60s who connoted unfettered, 'natural' sexuality – Silvana Mangano, Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, Bardot – through displays of (semi)nudity in close association with nature, Deneuve was positioned as a woman whose sexuality was always under control and under wraps, her hair impeccably lacquered, her body hidden by fashionable clothes, a creature whose habitat was the salon rather than the hayfield or beach. In *La Vie de château*, a comedy set during the German occupation in which she is the object of desire of most of the male characters, the peak of her sexual display is to frolic around the château in a white nightdress. Her ordeal at the end of the film, while the men are busy with D-day, is to be forced to wade through a lake, sullyng her immaculate tailored suit.

In this respect Deneuve was continuing a tradition of elegant French actresses modelling couture clothes, from Michèle Morgan to Edwige Fenech, Martine Carol to Danielle Darrieux (at the beginning of her career she was even known as the new Darrieux). But whereas in the 50s such actors and their films (*Adorables créatures*, *Mannequins de Paris*) celebrated women's fashions, in the 60s Deneuve's clothes played a more ambiguous role, particularly in auteur cinema. For example, Buñuel in *Belle de jour* used them as an index of bourgeois repression, and the film, which marked the beginning of a long-standing partnership between Deneuve and designer Yves Saint-Laurent, fixed her image for many years as the epitome of the *soignée* bourgeoisie. The Saint-Laurent clothes – figure-hugging, tailored, with skirts cut just above the knee – included an element of sexual display, but a controlled and class-coded one, which acted as a foil to Séverine's 'true' sexuality, expressed through her masochistic fantasies and rough sexual encounters at the brothel. A great deal of writing on *Belle de jour* has pondered where the division between 'reality' and 'fantasy' in the film lies, but with feminist hindsight both sides of the Séverine character appear equally fantastic.

Belle de jour turned Deneuve into an international star. Creating a moment of perfect fit between performer, character and image, Buñuel's film successfully combined her exist-



Catherine Deneuve as icon of sexuality, opposite, and in Régis Wargnier's 'Indochine', above, where she is almost a symbol of France itself, striding through a conquered world

ing, antagonistic, personae – the proper *jeune fille* of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* and the schizophrenic killer of *Repulsion* – into the ambiguous figure of the ice maiden whose intimidating beauty both covers and suggests intense sexuality. For an art film, *Belle de jour* was a box-office success, and the persona it established for Deneuve endured through Truffaut's *La Sirène du Mississippi* (1969), Buñuel's *Tristana* (1970), and Marco Ferreri's *Liza* (1971) – and in subdued form to *Le Dernier métro* and *Indochine*.

Given her immense popularity both at home and abroad, it is worth pondering where Deneuve's appeal lies. One clue is that, as Simone de Beauvoir has pointed out, female 'virginity' or 'frigidity' invite male conquest and suggest the need for a man to reveal to the woman her own sexuality (the Michel Piccoli character indirectly fulfils this function in *Belle de jour*). The young virgin (the older one is only ever an object of ridicule) is thus attractive because of her presumed incompleteness. It is not surprising to find her in the work of Buñuel, since the child-woman was a figure of fascination for the Surrealists, who wrote abundantly on her attractions.

There is a further, sadistic twist to this figure of male fantasy. The more immaculate and inaccessible the woman, the more she is deemed to invite profanation, which is then ascribed to her 'masochism'. The youthful Deneuve got a lot of that: she is flagellated and pelted with mud in *Belle de jour*, has a leg amputated in *Tristana* and is treated literally like a dog on a leash in *Liza*. Later, as a vampire in

The Hunger (1982), she is covered with blood. Many female actors have been put through such ordeals on screen, but the characteristic specific to Deneuve is her simultaneous representation of extreme beauty and its defilement, from reverence to rape, in a single image. In a lighter vein, watching her peel potatoes in *Le Dernier métro* causes a special *frisson*, as does seeing her cast as an 'ordinary', cardigan-clad provincial housewife in André Téchiné's *Le Lieu du crime* (1986).

Deneuve's mask-like face and understated performance style, her glamour and aloofness, her ice-maiden image and, as Truffaut put it, "dream element", were a throwback to the great female icons of Greta Garbo and Grace Kelly, with both of whom she has often been compared. Such qualities marked her out as different from her French contemporaries: whether the Bardot-type sex goddesses, the existential New Wave heroines, or, later, naturalistic actors such as Annie Girardot, Isabelle Huppert and Miou-Miou, or, again, the expressionist style of her contemporary rival in stardom, Isabelle Adjani.

Power and glamour

Deneuve's international career has taken her mainly to Italy, though she has made four films in Hollywood, of which Robert Aldrich's *Hustle* (1975), in which she plays a high-class call girl, and Tony Scott's vampire movie *The Hunger* are the most notable. She has, however, long been known in the US as "the most beautiful woman in the world", thanks as much to her commer-

cials for Chanel as to her films. The exportability of Deneuve's image gives us another clue to her appeal. The combination of classy elegance and sexuality reflects precisely the two dominant clichés attached to French women: they dress well and they are highly sexed. Deneuve's success is linked to the way she has more or less willingly embraced these nationally coded values, both at home and abroad.

Acting as a semi-official ambassador for French fashion on and off screen, Deneuve did nothing to contradict the high-class mannequin image which emerged from *Belle de jour* and which informs all her film roles up to *Indochine* – where her exquisite frocks are a highlight. In terms of sexuality, the fit has been less perfect. While Deneuve was idolised as the perfect *jeune fille* in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, her private life was considered scandalous, especially the fact that she had an illegitimate child with Vadim in 1963. Later both her screen image and public mores caught up with her. Her character in *Je vous aime* (directed by Claude Berri in 1981), for example, has a multitude of lovers and children by different fathers – a scenario not too far removed from the star's own life. And in her latest film, André Téchiné's *Ma saison préférée*, she plays opposite Chiara, her 20-year-old daughter with Marcello Mastroianni, whom she also did not marry.

Deneuve has acted in comedies throughout her career, but though a few have been suc- ▶



Women and their discontents: the different faces of Catherine Deneuve, in Polanski's 'Repulsion', top; in Buñuel's 'Belle de jour', centre; and in Tony Scott's 'The Hunger', bottom

Successful, including *La Vie de château* and *Le Sauvage* (1974, with Yves Montand, also directed by Rappeneau), on the whole such roles have seemed at odds with her persona (Zig-Zag, directed by Laszlo Szabo in 1974 and her one attempt at producing flopped). She has retained the image established by her more serious films into the 80s and 90s, and as she has aged (extremely gracefully), the ice maiden has given way to the tragic *grande bourgeoisie* – often a heroic mother whose sedate if glamorous life is disturbed by sexual passion, usually stirred up by a younger man. Two films in particular show the durability of the sexual (re)awakening theme: *Le Lieu du crime* (with Wadek Stanczak as a young criminal) and *Paroles et musique* (directed in 1984 by Elie Chouraqui, with Christophe Lambert as a rock star). Both deal in the familiar screen conflict between a woman's sexuality and motherhood. In *Le Lieu du crime*, resolution is achieved in apocalyptic fashion (the young man is killed, Deneuve's son is estranged and she gives herself up to the police), while in *Paroles et musique* she returns to her husband and children. In *Indochine* too, Deneuve is allowed a sexual relationship with a younger man (Vincent Pérez), only to be denied it when the young lover is paired with her adopted daughter.

Such narratives and the way Deneuve is used within them are indicative of the unease of French film in dealing with sexually active,

mature female characters and actors. But they are also attempts at integrating into film specific features of contemporary French feminism, a task for which the later Deneuve persona is well suited. Deneuve's characters of the 80s and 90s, with their combination of glamour, independence and determination, have been much more pleasurable for female spectators than the male fantasies of the 60s and early 70s. Deneuve has increasingly been perceived as liberated (partly for the same reasons as she was regarded as scandalous in the 60s) both on and off screen, evidenced by Gérard Depardieu's remark: "Catherine Deneuve is the man I would have liked to be." She took up overtly feminist positions when it was decidedly unfashionable in the 70s and in 1982 declared to *Le Nouvel Observateur*, "Yes, I am a feminist." And she is one of the actresses who makes recordings of women's novels for the feminist publishing house *Editions des femmes*.

But Deneuve is a very French feminist, which is to say that, like Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and other prominent French writers, her feminism is combined with glamour and elegance in a way often perceived as utterly contradictory in Britain and North America. As the discourse of overt feminism has gradually disappeared from the French political and cultural scene, one of the ways its impact has endured is through the presence in public life of professionally and intellectually powerful women who are also glamorous: examples that spring to mind include government officials Elisabeth Guigou, Martine Aubry and Ségolène Royal, the charismatic television journalist Christine Ockrent (who looks not unlike the short-haired Deneuve), and successful filmmakers Diane Kurys and Coline Serreau.

But if Guigou, Ockrent *et al* obey – and shape – the logic of the French job market and political scene, the logic Deneuve follows is that of the French star system. And within that system, her gender and looks are a double-edged weapon. As in her youth, they are a reminder of her to-be-looked-at-ness and of the burden of carrying the nationally coded signs of elegance and sexuality. But they are also a powerful source of pleasure, and, not negligibly, of revenue. If femininity is a masquerade, then the cool elegance of these professional French women is a sign of their being in control, rather than of being controlled as was the case back in the 60s.

Emblem of France

Deneuve is powerful in other ways too. In the embattled financial and shifting genre structures of recent French cinema, major stars are more important than ever, not for their capacity to attract audiences to cinemas, but as a means of raising production funds, guaranteeing television and video sales and generating media coverage. The cult television cultural chat show *Bouillon de culture* devoted a whole programme to Deneuve to coincide with the release of *Indochine*, as if to prove that Wagnier could not have got the film off the ground without her, or at least not on such a scale. In return, she received a real leading part in a major production – a rare opportunity in

recent years, when it has seemed as if her presence and looks were enough to signify a constellation of traits – career woman who remains feminine, determined but tragic mother, strong-willed but vulnerable lover – that allude to the changing roles of French women, but at the same time confine them to precisely this symbolic function. In films such as *Le Choc* (1981, with Alain Delon), *Le Choix des armes* (1981, with Yves Montand and Gérard Depardieu) and *Fort Saganne* (1984, with Depardieu), Deneuve featured in roles which were not cameos, but which occupied very little screen time and had little narrative importance compared to the roles of her male partners; yet the producers still claimed her as a major star.

This is not just clever marketing, but exemplifies a traditional gender imbalance in French casting going back to the 30s, whereby female stars may get leading parts in auteur cinema, but only exceptionally in the mainstream. It is also a perhaps unwelcome side-effect of Deneuve's elevated status. Because of her exemplary career in both auteur and mainstream film, and of her perceived embodiment of the values of French womanhood, she has become the symbol of a certain idea of French cinema as well as of France (it was perhaps inevitable that it was Deneuve who was chosen to accompany the Minister for Culture, Jack Lang, to open a festival of French film in New York in 1983). Indeed in *Indochine*, Deneuve's dominating narrative role could be ascribed as a symbolic representation of France, portrayed as the liberal colonising force.

It is a measure of the importance of cinematic culture in France that film stars are so strongly implicated in representations of national identity. Jean Gabin, as the train driver of Jean Renoir's *La Bête humaine*, became the key symbolic figure in the celebrations to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, in much the same way as Bardot and Deneuve literally personify France in the statues of Marianne. As might be expected, the male representation is historically grounded and actively social; the female one abstract and passive. Of course Gabin could model himself on Georges Clémenceau for *Le Président* in 1961, while Deneuve could only realistically be cast as a president's lover, as in *Le Bon plaisir* (1983, directed by Francis Girod). But the difference goes beyond role models, since male stars such as Gérard Depardieu are offered a far wider range of roles encompassing a spectrum of characters from French social history, whether based on real or fictional sources (for example, *Danton* or *Germinal*). And the recently formulated French heritage genre does not seem to have altered this pattern, in that male stars still dominate in films such as *Jean de Florette*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Tous les matins du monde*.

But perhaps the success of *Camille Claudel* (with Isabelle Adjani), *L'Amant*, and indeed of *Indochine* will herald better leads for female stars of Deneuve's stature. French history, society and literature, after all, are not devoid of tough, inspiring and glamorous women crying out to be embodied by Catherine Deneuve. *'Indochine' opens on 26 March and is reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau on page 48 of this issue*

Far from Vietnam

What does the warm reception given 'Indochine' in both France and Vietnam reveal about the two cultures?

By Anne Jackel and Xavier Michel Duverger

The release in the first quarter of 1992 of three films that touched on the French colonial experience in Indochina received unprecedented media coverage in France, where – unlike in the United States – war films are rare and the events in Indochina have been hitherto largely ignored by cinema. By the end of the year, Jean-Jacques Annaud's *The Lover*, Pierre Schoendoerffer's *Diên Biên Phủ* and Régis Wargnier's *Indochine* proved to have been among the most popular domestic films: *The Lover* (though not as successful as *Basic Instinct* at the French box office) accounted for receipts of almost FF50 million as the top French film; *Indochine* followed in third place, with takings of around FF35 million, closely behind 1492: *Conquest of Paradise*; even *Diên Biên Phủ*, a war film lacking the appeal of a romantic love story, appeared in the top ten.

It is a welcome success story for large-scale French projects in an increasingly shrinking domestic market. With their budgets of between FF112 million and FF150 million, the three films were among the most expensive produced in 1991, and were financed largely by French capital (*The Lover*, a Franco-British co-production with a majority French share of 80 per cent is the only one shot in English). Back in 1987, the excellent box-office response to Claude Berri's *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* convinced producers – and their financiers – that they had found a substitute for the no longer popular French *policiers* and comedies in literary adaptations set in 'authentic' French locations and rooted in 'genuine' French culture. But new strategies developed in the late 80s to encourage the production of big-budget movies did nothing to halt the decline in cinema audiences (which reached an all-time low of 117 million in 1991) or to dent the growing popularity of US blockbusters. Film budgets may have soared, but spectacular historical adaptations and period melodramas have on the whole failed at the box office.

Mythical past

In the 90s the more exotic locations of France's imperial past seem to have struck a chord in the imagination – if not the conscience – of French audiences. The origin of this desire to revisit a seemingly forgotten past goes back to 1990 and 1991, when the Vietnamese government announced the re-opening of its borders and eased a situation which had previously precluded any exchange, cultural or otherwise.

The media coverage and intense promotional campaigns the three films engendered emphasised their importance as cultural events. Each release was accompanied by the publication of a photo-album-story book, providing a new set of printed references for this 'rediscovered' imaginary past. Yet there was no sign of unease among the many interviews, articles and debates which surrounded the films' appearance and hardly any attempt was made to explore further the legacy of France's colonial past. No discomfort was exhibited, and comments were restricted on the whole to a series of aesthetic value judgments, various comments on the paucity of French films dealing with France's colonial past and the Vietnam war – by comparison with American production – and a vague consensus on the convenient timing of the reconcilia-

tion, as exemplified by the collaboration of General Giap and the French army forces on *Diên Biên Phủ*.

France has always had a strong belief in a universal cultural mission, but the emergence in the last decade of a *Beur* or Franco-Arab culture, among others, has challenged the alleged consensus on national and cultural identity at a time when the nation has had difficulty in articulating a new post-colonialist identity. Throughout her long colonial history, France annexed a great number of territories, but the 'otherness' of the people annexed was supposed magically to disappear into an established French identity based in part on the purported universality of the principles established by the French Revolution. *Indochine* and *Diên Biên Phủ* undoubtedly raise questions of identity, but solve them through the recreation of a mythical and unproblematic colonial past based on an implicitly assimilationist model. In that sense, they do not constitute post-colonial texts, but neo-colonial texts in an appropriately formalist classical style.

Films occupy a significant position in the process of the construction of values and identity. But the new brand of mainstream film-making in 1992 France belongs to a cinema of the past, a cinema which like British heritage films attempts to forge a national consensus based on the celebration of a nationhood deeply rooted in a colonial empire. The very success of films anchored in images of a lost and largely mythical past and their acceptance and popularity with both left and right is not only symptomatic of the identity crisis experienced by France during the Mitterrand years, but also reveals a France unprepared for the cultural renewal needed to come to terms with recent socio-economic and cultural developments. It is a France which, unable to offer a model for Europe, indulges in a nostalgic world of make-believe, the only place where the illusion of an unproblematic colonial model can be maintained.

In June 1992, at the National Film Theatre in London, Jean-Luc Godard said: "When you have no identity, you are searching for an image." Yet the image conveyed by the picture-book historicism of the films of 1992 is a regressive one that is unlikely to help French cinema survive its present identity crisis, even if it temporarily succeeds in keeping the industry afloat. From a country with a legendary commitment at both individual and institutional levels to the protection of the art form of the twentieth century and its continuation into the twenty-first, one may have expected something more innovative.

But what is perhaps even more problematic is the reaction of the Vietnamese to the



Cheek to cheek: Eliane (Catherine Deneuve) with her adopted daughter Camille (Linh Dan Phan), who is the star of the film for its Korean audiences

French projects. One would have thought that a product that had to be made palatable to mainstream western audiences in order to justify its multi-million Franc investment would inevitably have offended the sensibilities of the Vietnamese people. Yet not only did the Vietnamese government authorise filming, but it also went so far as to provide facilities, technicians and thousands of extras. Five thousand Vietnamese soldiers were cast in the final scene of *Diên Biên Phủ*; Nguyen Thu, director of photography in Hanoi and ex-cameraman of the Vietnamese Popular Army at the battle of *Diên Biên Phủ*, was put in charge of co-ordinating Vietnamese participation (Schoendoerffer had served in the same position in the same battle for the French army). Indeed, Schoendoerffer made his film at the invitation of the Vietnamese authorities and with their approval (a fact which may explain the film's total silence on the ideological context of the war).

Distorting mirrors

There were protests – the Vietnamese journal *Hanoi Moi* pointed out that the film gave only the French director's point of view and wondered why the French were prepared "to spend FF100m to recreate their worst defeat abroad" – but the Vietnamese authorities dispelled any doubts. General Giap is reported to have convinced reluctant communists of the value of the project, emphasising its political impact and economic interest.

Trade was bound to follow, he claimed, and he was not entirely wrong. Who would have thought that the war-torn country of Vietnam would one day become the latest fashionable destination for French tourists? Yet today, the French are starting to rediscover the charms of their ex-colony and travel agents are urging their customers to take their holidays there before the United States lifts its embargo and the country changes too much. The images they sell are those of the films.

The journal of the Franco-Vietnamese Association commented that "whatever the faults and the omissions in the three films, they are important because they signal that, after 40 years, the period of bereavement is finally over. Indochina comes out of the dark." The article optimistically concluded: "France realises that the Empire is dead." But does she? Aren't the images of the empire and its alleged shared (French) culture the main attractions of the films to French audiences?

The worst scenario would be that when the films open in Vietnam, they seduce the Vietnamese too and become a distorting mirror in which Vietnamese audiences see and accept the images the French media have created to portray them. Indeed in Korea, the 'cultural capital' born out of years of communism seems to have allowed a different reading of *Indochine* which privileges the second part of the film and makes Linh Dan Phan (Camille, Eliane's adopted daughter) the heroine and the film a star vehicle for the young Vietnamese actress – and a box-office hit. Or could it be that cinema audiences in South East Asia are so deprived of images of themselves in European films that they acclaim any western film prepared to engage with any such representation?

Drafted in to play a tutor in Derek Jarman's 'Wittgenstein', Michael O'Pray reflects on how the film was made and on the similarities between the director and the philosopher

PHILOSOPHICAL EXTRAS

● Derek Jarman was directing a film written by Terry Eagleton and produced by Tariq Ali's company Bandung, renowned primarily for its documentaries. And I'd had a call to appear as a tutor in an early scene. Always keen to confirm my total lack of acting skills and at the same time to indulge a vanity of sorts, I turned up at the backstreet studio off Waterloo Station as I'd been asked, all in black – not a difficult request to meet these days.

The thought of playing a tutor in Jarman's *Wittgenstein* had a certain irony as I'd been a philosophy student in a stronghold of Wittgensteinianism at London University in the 70s. So there was an odd but satisfying sense of a circle being completed. It also seemed a fascinating opportunity to meet again a group of figures who represented for someone in his late 40s a certain radical past – Tariq Ali, whom I'd last seen in the flesh in a military jacket with a similarly clad Robin Blackburn heading an anti-Vietnam demo in the late 60s; Eagleton, the propounder of Marxist aesthetics who had doggedly charted the intellectual passage of the intervening years; Jarman, a *bête noire* who in the mid-80s, against all odds, had turned out an important political film-maker.

All three were brought into what seemed an unholy alliance through *Wittgenstein*, whose politics and sexuality had been carefully skirted until the recent publication of Ray Monk's biography. Wittgenstein's homosexuality had always been known, but the knowledge had been protected by his literary heirs. What Jarman found in him was a gay figure whose life was not one with which he might immediately identify – a tortured Austrian philosopher who lived for much of his life in Cambridge.

The last time I'd been in one of Derek's films was in the heyday of yuppie Britain, in *The Last of England* (1987) filmed on a massive Docklands quay in the heart of the Thatcherite dream (and where Kubrick had shot *Full Metal Jacket*). The day was spent in down-and-out attire, for the most part supping tea in a caravan with other actors sheltering from the bitter cold (the conventional distinction between actor and extra always seems wrong in Jarman's films, as most of his 'extras' are friends playing truant from other lives). The film was shot on Super 8 by the younger generation of Cerith Wyn Evans, Chris Hughes and Richard Heslop. *The Last of England* now seems like the last gasp of that post-punk movement which had witnessed the rise of

Thatcher and the dissolution of Britain and had reacted to it with a visual excess that owed much to Derek's early work.

The atmosphere on the set of *Wittgenstein* is much the same – friendly production people offering coffee and shouting for quiet; two cooks amicably squabbling in the kitchen; an ex-BBC make-up artist busy in the corner of what looks like an old school hall; a good-looking young boy (obviously young Wittgenstein) reading rather self-consciously with his attractive chaperone; sculptor and actor Roger Cook (who played Jesus in *The Garden*) also dressed in black and also busy reading at a long trestle table. The six tutors are Derek's literary agent, one of the production managers, two sisters who own a coffee bar in Soho, Roger Cook and myself. Tariq Ali appears rather bemusedly from time to time to survey the scene, in between answering the phone and doing interviews for American journalists and film crews alerted the day before of president-to-be Bill Clinton's Oxford student days in the radical 60s. The disparate histories of the twentieth century giddily coalesce on this strange day.

Joe Orton of philosophy

Discovered to be a tutor, I am sent to the make-up artist, and as she transforms me into a white-faced, dark-eyed, slicked-back-hair vampire (a great improvement, I feel) I understand Derek's interpretation of Wittgenstein's early education. Afterwards, my face under the stiff mask, I wander around, smoking cigarettes, drinking black coffee and attempting unsuccessfully to read. When Derek emerges from the studio he finds my transformation funny and drags me in to watch the shooting. There are about 15 people on set, but the atmosphere is relaxed. Derek looks well and is in his element, busy filling me in on the scene and life in general while flitting off to check a detail or to ask the cameraman's opinion on the shot and, after the first take, quick to suggest to the young boy what movements to make (he is supposed to be in a cinema sucking a lolly and making shadows on the screen with his hands).

Film critics should have to spend a day as an actor/extra every few years to remind them of the difficulties not only of making films, but of acting itself. A few days later, no longer burdened by anxieties about my skills, I visit the set again to find Karl Johnson, who played Ariel in *The Tempest*, wandering about deep in

thought, muttering to himself and looking disturbingly like Wittgenstein. Tilda Swinton is busy becoming Lady Ottoline for the funny bedroom scene with Bertrand Russell, played by Michael Gough, who turns up later. The ballet dancer Lynn Seymour is sitting patiently in a tutu behind the camera waiting for her scene. Derek seems more fraught and tired, and though he is on schedule (just), he will have to rely on long hours (8am to 7.30pm) and the goodwill of the crew. "That's why it's important to work with friends," he explains. At one point, to ease the crew's nerves over a particular set-up, he calls: "Take your time. We're not under any pressure."

Gwynn Pritchard, the then commissioning editor for education at Channel 4, approached Tariq Ali about a series on great philosophers treated as 52-minute plays about the philosophers' lives and ideas rather than the usual Bryan Magee-type talking-head approach. Ali commissioned four scripts from left-wing writers: Howard Brenton for Socrates, Ali for Spinoza, David Edgar for Locke and Terry Eagleton for Wittgenstein. Pritchard left Channel 4 and budget cuts excluded Socrates. Spinoza is directed by Christopher Spencer, who has done documentaries in the past for Ali's company Bandung, and Locke by Peter Wollen. But for Wittgenstein, Ali "needed a director with a fantastic amount of vision and imagination... and Jarman came to mind." Ali had seen and admired *The Tempest*, *Caravaggio* and *Edward II* and as he saw it, Wittgenstein needed someone "quirky and with lateral thinking to bring this very weird mystic to life." Derek thought the script was "quite cheerful and good fun". The budget was considerably under £200,000; Jarman had no problem working to low budgets but wanted to do the commission on film, unlike the others which were on tape.

Ben Gibson at the BFI Production Division was approached. He was "tickled" by the idea of Eagleton and Jarman doing Wittgenstein and put more money in with some hope of theatrical release, a showing at the Berlin Film Festival and the desire for the film to be shot on Super 16. The theatrical and television rights were sold to Uplink in Japan (the distributors there of all Jarman's films), who wanted a 35mm blown-up version. This input increased the length from 52 to about 78 minutes. Ali remarks that when Derek's "amazing community of friends and people who worked with him got in on the act, we had fantastic support." He was impressed by the "stunning" visuals of the rushes, achieved very simply with "black drapes and rich colours in front". "I enjoy the improvisation and directors who are not bound by convention." Eagleton's script was written to be shot on location in Cambridge, so a lot of changes had to be made for it to be shot in a studio. But as Ali affirms: "I think we've remained loyal to the spirit of his script." Derek had told Ali that he now enjoys working in a studio and that at this stage in his life a two-week studio shoot is something he still feels he can do quite easily.

While the question of whether or not Wittgenstein was gay is no longer an issue – he was – the nature of his sexual practice still



Between heaven and earth: Clancy Chassay as the child Wittgenstein, with his flying machine

churns the waters. Was he a promiscuous client of rough trade? Was he, as some have described him, the "Joe Orton of philosophy"? Whatever the truth, Jarman has handled Wittgenstein's love life with warmth and a gentleness that could only offend the intransigent who feels the philosopher's private life is not for the public domain.

Jarman has definitely tweaked Eagleton's script (and gained much, one feels, from its toughness). The result is an irreverent but passionate portrait of the philosopher as a tortured spirit and lover of men. According to Ali, the Martian figure, a humorous rendering of Wittgenstein's use of an alien to draw out philosophical points about language games and forms of life, is a Jarman addition. And with Wittgenstein Jarman is at last dealing with a gay figure of the twentieth century – unlike Sebastian, Caravaggio or Edward II. (*War Requiem* is the film that comes the closest.)

The similarities between director and subject matter are stronger than their very different lives might indicate and Wittgenstein's unease with his sexuality and attitude to authority form some common ground. Jar-

man's struggle to come out was difficult and as one of a generation shaped in the austere moralism of the 50s, he still admits to not being entirely at ease with his sexuality. Also director and philosopher share an identification of work with a spiritual and moral personal quest. Wittgenstein's residency in England, an exile in a culture in which he did not quite fit, provides a metaphor perhaps for Jarman's own ambivalent relationship to his culture.

Jarman's film is also a witty take on the Bloomsbury culture that supported the young and hypersensitive Viennese philosopher. Keynes, Russell and Lady Ottoline recognised Wittgenstein's genius but failed to understand his work in its profoundest sense – that the limitations placed on philosophy were at the same time an acknowledgment of the joyous and torturous nature of life itself. As Wittgenstein stated: the "unutterable will be – unutterably – contained in what has been uttered" – a view that enmeshed logic with mysticism. Wittgenstein read avidly cheap crime magazines, loved Westerns, lived simply (a bed and a canvas chair often sufficed), was a brave soldier, dressed

outrageously for his times (open-necked shirts and leather jerkins at Cambridge high table), gave away his personal fortune to poets and others and revolutionised philosophy.

When I was a student Wittgenstein always seemed to make Sartre and any other twentieth-century philosopher you could name seem dull and bourgeois. His life was dedicated to rational thought; he was also the most self-conscious philosopher of the century. He understood the insanity that lurked in philosophical discourse, especially in the sceptical tradition. His ideas flowing through Oxford and Cambridge and the American departments influenced sociology, anthropology, psychology and all branches of philosophy itself. His writing was either gnomic and poetic as in the *Tractatus* or intensely personal as in the first-person agonies of *Philosophical Investigations*.

Torment and humour

Wittgenstein's doubt and anguish about articulating ideas comes close to that of the Romantic artist. There is also a moral and intensely personal quest locked in the need for clarity in what may seem to many to be arcane matters of philosophical discourse, but which for Wittgenstein was an attempt to fix the bounds of sense. Jarman has looked at the life as one of torment and humour and has used his own engaging irony. Unlike with Jarman, the connections between Wittgenstein's homosexuality and his work were strenuously and angrily denied by him; nevertheless, there is a passion and intensity which we feel taps a tremendous sexual energy and turmoil.

Wittgenstein is a further depiction by Jarman of childhood, one imagines his own. (Autobiography is central to his work since *Caravaggio*.) The figure of the boy child appears in *The Last of England* (Jarman himself shot on home movies by his father), *The Garden* and *Edward II*, in which Edward's son is very much an observer of events who triumphs (perhaps at some cost) in the last scene over the cruelty and omnipotent greed of the adult world. In *Wittgenstein* Jarman introduces the childhood of the philosopher in a way that does not reflect Monk's book and which satisfies Jarman's own idea of the boy being father to the man.

The enthusiastic reception of *Wittgenstein* at the Berlin Film Festival was not only expressive of the genuine love and admiration felt by audiences for Jarman the man, with his determination to continue to explore gay sexuality at a time when his own condition and that of many gay men is painful and tragic, but also for a film-maker who with each new film is adding to a body of work with its own shape, themes, forms and identity – however much he continues to experiment with new ideas as he promises to do with his next work, *Blueprint*. After the despair of *Edward II*, *Wittgenstein* offers hope and reconciliation. Wittgenstein dies peacefully in his bed – a contrast to the horror of Edward's death by red-hot poker. Jarman has always wrestled with two kinds of fantasy – one bred from Thanatos and the other from Eros. In *Wittgenstein*, it is the latter that triumphs.

'Wittgenstein' opens at the ICA, London, on 26 March and is reviewed on page 63 of this issue

Painting and cinema and the pollution of the image – these are among the concerns of the director of 'The Spirit of the Beehive' and 'The Quince Tree Sun'. He speaks with Rikki Morgan

VICTOR ERICE PAINTING THE SUN



Counted among the grand auteurs of Spanish cinema, Victor Erice has directed only three films in 20 years. Made in 1973 as the Franco regime tightened its dying grasp on censorship, *The Spirit of the Beehive* won lasting critical acclaim with its debunking of monster myths and an enigmatic child protagonist who seemed to embody the uncertain vision of a country ripe for political change. After ten years' silence, *The South* continued Erice's lyrical dissent and introduced an explicit preoccupation with the inexorable march of time. Another decade on, and Erice's latest film, the hybrid fiction/documentary *The Quince Tree Sun*, chronicles the impossible attempt of the painter Antonio López to capture on canvas the moment of splendour when the fruit on the quince tree in his garden ripens.

Rikki Morgan: As cinema reaches its 100th anniversary, what do you think there is left to say?

Victor Erice: Faced with the existing inflation of images – with what Wenders has called “pollution of the image” – one of the great problems we have as film-makers today is how to give authenticity, truth, to the mass-produced image. Television daily projects thousands of images into homes throughout the world – a flood that has brought about a hypertrophy of the image. We are forced to search constantly to regain a vision of the real image for cinema, and in this I find the relationship with painting very interesting because the painter was the first creator of images in our civilisation. For me, the painter is a primitive artist: painting is a language from the dawn and cinema a language from the twilight of our civilisation.

Of course we can't go back to what the early film-makers – Lumière, Vigo, the early Renoir, Murnau – were because there is almost 100 years of cinema bearing down on us. The cinema of that era didn't reflect on itself, it just let itself live. Yet sometimes you need to look back to the origins – not to imitate, because it's impossible to reproduce the same thing, but because within a disoriented world in crisis, those origins can shed a certain light. Today everything is made according to formulae, formulae that have expelled reality, stereotypes. There's a tiredness, almost a sickness. Even though there is cinema made with great talent, it is calculated. So it's important for cinema to get back in contact with reality.

This fascination with early – ‘silent’ – cinema is clearly present in the enigmatic silence of *The Spirit of the Beehive*, which relies less on spoken dialogue than on a complex pattern of sound and images to demystify the ‘monstrous’ creatures of the cinema screen and the artificially speechless adult world of post-Civil War Spain.

The Spirit of the Beehive speaks of the generation who had lived through the Civil War. And civil war is the most terrible experience a community can live through because brother is set against brother. In a civil war everyone is defeated – there are no real victors. What characterises those people in my memory of my childhood is that they were in general very silent, introspective people. They didn't want to speak because they had lived through something so horrific. We children experienced it as a form of absence: we sensed that deep down

they were far away. And perhaps that is why there was a lack of communication.

The highly metaphorical language of the film is often seen as a strategy in response to the restrictions of censorship as well as a reflection of the atmosphere within a silenced generation.

It's something you can't judge according to notions of political determinism. I didn't set out to solve the problem of censorship: I was mainly concerned to find my own voice, and since lack of freedom is something that people of my generation carry within us, I assumed my voice would reflect that lack of freedom in a natural way. I have always believed that artistic language – and particularly poetry – is a language that is not socially codified and that censors understand only what is socially codified. So the censor was unable to cut a single metre of *The Spirit of the Beehive*: they sensed it wasn't a film that was favourable to their ideas, but they couldn't find the arguments to destroy it.

But does this complexity inevitably compromise the authenticity of the image?

In cinema there is a language of prose and a language of poetry. It's a distinction Pasolini liked to make: he talked about *cinema de prosa* and *cinema de poesia* to differentiate the two types of language. Prose always recounts things in a direct way, whereas poetry expresses the ideas of the world in a totally indirect way, and more powerfully perhaps, because it speaks to the unconscious.

One of the things I was most interested in with *The Quince Tree Sun* was to bring together the most objective language – that of documentary – and the most intimate, which is the expression of the dream. The film I had most in mind was Murnau's *Tabu*, which also mixes documentary and fiction. An important part of cinema history is built on that tension: *Tabu*, some of Vigo's films, Rossellini's *Paisà*, *Rome Open City*, *Germany Year Zero*, Renoir's *The River*, *Hiroshima mon amour*.

How does the treatment of reality in the earlier films differ from this transformation of the documentary format?

The Quince Tree Sun could be understood as a work journal, a chronicle of work day by day. In *The South* and *The Spirit of the Beehive* it's a different procedure because they are films that speak about the past. The procedure there was to take account of reality, but to influence it or even modify it to make it expressive – to reconstruct the feeling of the past. That required the more classical role of the director as someone who builds a universe by his own means.

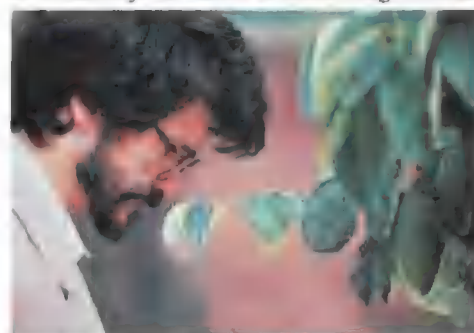
Is there an inevitable conflict between imposing a particular interpretation of reality – even when it's only in the selection and organisation of images – and the pursuit of truth?

Generally I don't like cinema in which the message is very obvious, so I'd prefer to call it showing or suggesting a particular interpretation rather than imposing it. The language of television is an authoritarian language that seeks a hidden means of persuading the consciousness, whereas the language of cinema – or at least of the cinema I like – communicates on an emotional level and obliges people to look within themselves, but without the idea of a rigid or direct discourse. I think all the films

I have made have a common characteristic: they describe a journey of discovery, a spiritual journey. At the outset there is a consciousness that is beginning to discover things and at the end of the journey that consciousness has understood something.

How might this spiritual journey be understood in relation to *The Spirit of the Beehive*?

We see the child's consciousness being formed throughout the film – a consciousness that will be characterised forever as separated from the conventional vision of the world. It could be the consciousness of an artist, an excess of vision through which artists see things that others don't see, or see them in a different way. At the beginning Ana is a docile, timid person – just a child who asks questions. She can't understand how there can be something so absurd in life or so terrible that makes a monster kill a child. What the monster wants, in his misery, is to be accepted into society, yet society rejects him – perhaps because of his excess of humanity, for there is something tremen-



The art of nature: Victor Erice at work

dously humane in the monster. So the child's identification with him is the identification with those who suffer, because she experiences suffering too.

In the beginning Ana exists only through her sister or through the things she is told about, but by the end she exists in her own right. The first trace of her identity has been formed, and that is why she says “I am” for the first time. But that formative process involves pain. Knowledge is like a wound; consciousness is formed through a wound.

In the absence of ■ driving narrative or pronounced formal manipulation – other than the discipline of still camera and real-time material – *The Quince Tree Sun* seems to depend for its dramatic tension on ■ dialogue between art and nature.

On the one hand there is nature, the tree, a living subject, and on the other is painting, which is trying to reproduce the tree at the precise moment of its splendour. But the tree is not a still life: it's moving, it's alive. And that creates a tension which replicates the myth of mankind's struggle to control nature.

Is there a similar tension – or dialogue – between painting and cinema?

There is a confrontation – or relationship – between the language of painting and that of film. The artist works only with the moment, but the movie camera can capture something the painter cannot: the movement of time. Time is present in every work of artistic creation because mankind seeks permanence. The struggle to remain in the midst of what is transitory is an expression of the tragic condi- ►

tion of existence. So Antonio Lopez's attempt to halt the tree's natural cycle and capture forever a moment in its life is doomed to failure. But he accepts this failure because he considers the tree to be something so accomplished, so complete.

Isn't there a contradiction between this respect for nature and the interference with it that Antonio's strategies to halt the movement of the tree represent? As he started work and put a metal structure round the tree, it became something else – like an artist's model. Then with the splashes of paint, like make-up, that he put on it as markers, it gradually lost its identity as a tree. When Antonio finished his work and started to take everything off – the metal structure, the plastic – I suddenly said: "But it's just a little tree!" For eight weeks we hadn't seen it as a tree.

Antonio tries to stop the flow of time, but the moment comes when he can't go on because the quinces are falling. He gets up and picks a fruit and that is when he accepts the destiny of the tree. That is when he accepts the defeat of the human enterprise and allows the

tree to continue its course. For me, that is the most emotional act of the film.

Yet the film goes on after the defeat of the painter to follow the rest of the cycle of the fruit.

The film could have ended when the painter withdraws, but I felt obliged to show the generosity of this fragile little tree that every year, in silence, produces fruits which serve as food for people. Everything that has life is a source of life. When an audience sees the film and follows the path we have walked, they make the process which has been ours their own. Everyone has the capacity to create and recreate within them. And a film doesn't exist unless it is seen – if there are no eyes to look at the images, the images don't exist. When I've finished a film, it's no longer mine – it belongs to the people. I'm nothing more than an intermediary in this process.

Is there a correlation between this recognition of the need to relinquish ownership of the artistic product and the relationship between Estrella and her father in 'The South'?

Estrella came to understand that her father

was not a magician, but just a man. It's a natural law that all parents are defeated by their children: a child grows up and finds its own place and its own identity in the world and that means leaving behind some of the legacy of its parents – not forgetting that legacy, but transcending it in order to become a person. In all parenthood, the creators are defeated by their offspring – and that applies to artistic creation too. But there are people – mothers and fathers – who would like their experience with their children to crystallise at a moment in infancy. That is what happens to Estrella's father.

Production difficulties prevented the filming of the final part of 'The South'. What implications did that have for the effectiveness of the film?

The father was a man divided between two histories, two universes: the universe of the north and that of the south. But in his lifetime he was unable to make the journey to the south to unite what had been separated. That is why, on the last night of his life, he places under his daughter's pillow the symbol of what had united them most: the pendulum. And in

Paul Julian Smith on politics and art in the films of Erice

WHISPERS AND RAPTURE

Three features in two decades:

Victor Erice can hardly be accused of spreading himself too thin. Yet he has achieved an extraordinary presence in a Spanish cinema beset by a perpetual crisis of production, and as a member of a country whose culture rarely crosses the Pyrenees, his films are among the most widely known abroad. Antonio López, the painter subject of *The Quince Tree Sun*, calls him the most authentic of Spanish filmmakers – rivalled only by Pedro Almodóvar. While the juxtaposition could hardly be more incongruous – Erice's high seriousness contrasts sharply with Almodóvar's playful post-modernism – it begs the question of how Erice has achieved the status he undeniably enjoys and why his slight oeuvre looms so large in the history of Spanish and European cinema?

Erice is the quintessential auteur film-maker. *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), *The South* (1983), and *The Quince Tree Sun* (1992) stand among the most forceful products of the creative imagination of a single individual, undiluted by collaboration with others. In addition, his work is art cinema in its purest form. The loving attention paid to *mise en scène*, cinematography and lighting, the use of complex and elliptical narrative and the problematisation of the filmic apparatus make this a cinema of the highest intellectual rigour, untainted by base commercialism. And then there is the fact that Erice's cinema can be interpreted as a utopian project realised against all the odds and in the

teeth of hostile opposition. *The Spirit of the Beehive* challenged Francoist censorship; *The South* was left incomplete when the producer pulled the plug with some 20 minutes of screen time still to shoot; *The Quince Tree Sun* was made under very difficult conditions, with funding provided in part (and with rumoured acrimony) by María Moreno. Antonio López's fellow artist and wife.

The notion of Erice as solitary auteur, defender of the faith of abstract aestheticism, implacable enemy of the film-making establishment, is extraordinarily pervasive, if not entirely accurate. And it hides a central and fruitful contradiction in his cinematic practice: the attempt to combine the rapture of cinema, experienced as the ecstatic suspension of time before the luminous image, with the revelation of history through the exploration of the way the traumas of Spanish politics have made their presence felt over time. The contradiction is exemplified in *The Spirit of the Beehive*, where the enraptured face of Ana as she watches James Whale's *Frankenstein* is at once a comment on the power of cinema to transcend time and an oblique pointer to the reception of cinema at a historical moment – Francoist triumphalism of the 40s – when the horror on screen could be read as a metaphor for horrors off screen which could not be spoken.

Erice's cinematic manifesto was delivered before any of his feature films appeared. In an interview for the long-defunct Spanish magazine *Film Ideal*, published in 1969 on the release of his first commercial project, an episode in a portmanteau movie called *The Challenges*, the young director, a recent graduate of the official film school, claims to be interested only in auteur cinema. In the pure expression of an elitist intellectual who dares risk critical unpopularity and commercial failure, Erice asserts the autonomy of the

cinematic image, and confesses that he himself cannot resolve the elliptical enigmas of his own narrative. But in his self-proclaimed artistic isolation Erice remains vulnerable, attacking not only Francoist censorship and sclerotic Spanish production practices, but also the journalist he is speaking to for structuring his (unwritten) interview in a falsely novelistic fashion.

Fathers and daughters

In a famous conference convened by the Francoist regime itself, earlier film-makers had branded Spanish cinema politically futile, socially false, intellectually worthless, aesthetically valueless and industrially paralytic. Erice's quest for a new Spanish cinema, finally and triumphantly realised in *The Spirit of the Beehive*, was thus part of a widespread movement for artistic and political renovation. But 20 years after its release, the audacity and assurance of the film remain staggering. In the bravura opening sequence Erice cross-cuts between three unestablished locations in a bleak Castilian village: the improvised cinema in which two young girls watch *Frankenstein*; the bleached-out exterior where a veiled man tends the teeming inhabitants of the beehives; and the Vermeer-like interior where a woman sits before a window writing a letter to an unknown man. The leisurely action will reveal that the four characters are a family; but, famously, they never appear within the frame together.

But Erice's use of discontinuity editing is not simply a device borrowed from the art cinema of, say, Godard or Antonioni. It is also an oblique and typically elliptical pointer to the isolation of individuals within the false communality of Franco's Spain: in the words of the father, the glass beehive reveals "perpetual frantic haste, the useless effort of the multitude, a place where illness and death are not permitted." Erice's

shooting style is equally demanding, with a static camera holding tiny figures in long shot, standing out against a barren, freezing landscape. And the stubborn ellipses of plot also make rigorous demands on the audience. Erice cut some 20 pages of the script he had co-written with Angel Fernández Santos, including the explanatory frame tale in which the girl returns to the village as an adult; hence the series of unresolved ambiguities which bring the film close to the fantastic genre much in vogue at that time in Spanish narrative. But perhaps Erice's greatest achievement is to have seen, as one Spanish critic put it, "from behind the eyes" of a child.

It seems likely that the success of *The Spirit of the Beehive* at home and abroad derived in large part from its use of allusive techniques familiar from art cinema which could also be read as historical or political critique. To a Spanish audience trained in the indirect allusions of the Francoist aesthetic, the allegory was not hard to read, while foreign audiences found a film that fitted with international notions of auteur cinema and which flattered their wish to support anti-fascist resistance. The headline to the review in *Le Monde* said it all: "Frankenstein contre Franco".

Of course, Erice was not solely responsible for the success of his first feature. The luminous photography of Luis Cuadrado and hypnotic music of Luis de Pablo were vital, as was the performance of Ana Torrent (Ana), soon to star with Geraldine Chaplin in Carlos Saura's *Raise Ravens*. And co-scriptwriter Angel Fernández Santos went on to become the chief film critic of the prestigious daily *El País*, thus ensuring Erice useful and sympathetic press coverage in the future.

But there remains a problem with *The Spirit of the Beehive*. By using the family as an allegory of Spanish history (by focusing, in Vicente Molina Foix's words, on "the war behind the window"), Erice risks providing an

doing this he is giving her a mandate: it is she who must go to the south and do what he couldn't do.

So without its closing part in the south the film is profoundly mutilated, and it has been extremely painful for me not to have been able to finish it. In Estrella's journey to the south she was to unite the two halves of her father, so that in the end she too would have been able to say, "I am Estrella." The journey to the south was fundamental.

What difficulties does the production context present for film-makers in Spain today?

First and foremost, there's a lack of effective policy. Until now all the strategies have failed and it's an urgent problem because in 1993 we have to compete within the European market. Legislators and administrators need to formulate a better understanding of audiovisual media. And we still don't know what the market for Spanish cinema is because there's no monitoring of the box office – something we've been demanding for years. Neither is there a policy to stimulate private investment in



Images of death: the ending of 'The Quince Tree Sun'

cinema through tax incentives as there is in France and other countries.

There is a tendency to leave everything to market forces, as if anything not certified by the market should not exist. But to abandon artistic expression to market forces is to condemn other forms of expression to non-existence. Such forms may not represent a huge majority, but they represent someone and deserve to exist. Besides, that's often where the most valuable work is produced.

Does condemnation of the dominance of commercial concerns at the cost of artistic values imply an inevitable division between art and popular cinema? I think that 'popular' today is an empty concept. The audience is very divided – it doesn't constitute a mass in the way it did when cinema was a single entity. Throughout the world we're witnessing the birth of a new and valuable public that should be catered for – spectators who choose the films they want to see – and it's as much a public as any other, because the other is already served by the American and multinational productions.

How can we compete with those films that spend so much money on publicity alone, that are sold just on publicity? I don't pretend to get into that territory. I know there are spectators for the kind of films I make and like. So we must be allowed to use our initiative because if that is wiped out then something very valuable will be lost. Sometimes very beautiful things are born out of fragility.

The Quince Tree Sun' opens on 2 April and is reviewed on page 59 of this issue

alibi for a historical process and falsely personalising a politics which had real and deadly public effects. This problem of the family as asylum from history recurs more urgently in Erice's second feature, *The South*.

The opening sequence of *The South* is once more a bravura exercise in film-making. As dawn light filters into the bedroom of the teenage Estrella, we hear off camera the sounds of a dog barking, footsteps, and a woman's distraught voice. The shot holds still as Estrella wakes, sits up in bed and gazes pensively at the gleaming pendulum she holds on a chain in front of her eyes. Like *The Spirit of the Beehive*, then, *The South* is the story of a child's suspension before the magic of light; and like *The Spirit of the Beehive* it focuses on a family romance between father and daughter. The narrative exposition, typically fragmented, will gradually reveal in flashback that Estrella's father (played by a dubbed Omero Antonutti, fresh from the Tavianis' *Padre Padrone*) has committed suicide, disappointed in his love for both daughter and mistress.

The South is an unfinished elegy. Amid rumours (hotly denied) that the 500-page script would result in a four-hour playing time, Erice was compelled to leave unshot the final sequence in which Estrella leaves the barren north for the exotic south of her dreams, where she will commit incest with the half-brother her father had sired with his mistress. To the characters (and perhaps to the Basque-born Erice) the south is a magical place of escape and transcendence which is more spiritual than geographic. It is a space identified with cinema: father and daughter are entranced by the luminous image of a film star in a 11 movie. But where ten years earlier the rapture of cinema had offered an escape from the horrors of Francoist repression, here its status is less urgent, more sentimental. And while the ellipses of *The Spirit of the Beehive*

are to be read within the context of a cinema forced to couch its critique in allegory, those of *The South* come close to formal enigmas.

In his aestheticised depiction of the poverty-stricken Spain of the 50s and his privatisation of political issues, Erice repeats the lack of political analysis characteristic of Spanish society and cinema after the transition to democracy. Subscribing to what film historian José Enrique Monterde has called the "law of conciliation and consensus, the law that says that no one is guilty of anything and we were all victims," the ellipses of *The South* seem more a product of wilful amnesia than a provocation to memory. Erice, the self-proclaimed auteur, is thus not always innocent of that generic defect of Spanish film, *garbancismo* (literally 'chickpea-ism'): the lazy and nostalgic recourse to reassuring popular clichés.

The man who pulled the plug on the film four weeks before the end of the shooting schedule was Elías Querejeta, the most influential producer of the time. *The South* clearly benefited from being associated with a company specialising in serious art movies which dominated the prize and festival circuit, and like Saura's *Carmen* (made in the same year), it was granted a special government subsidy for films of "exceptional quality". In spite of appearances, Erice was hardly the isolated underdog.

The year in which *The South* and *Carmen* were released was also the year of the new Socialist government's generous reform of the state subsidy system. As film-makers rushed to realise pet projects (their zeal sometimes enhanced by the possibility of artificially inflating budgets), Erice avoided the big screen for ten years, making a living from publicity spots for Nescafé, for which his approach was no less meticulous than for his features. As subsidies began to dry up, the Spanish film industry resumed its decline. In the ten years following

the death of Franco the number of functioning cinemas fell by almost half and the audience for Spanish films by 80 per cent, from 78 to 14 million. The second half of the 80s was dominated by Almodóvar, whose production company El Deseo has trounced once profitable but more modest producers such as Querejeta. It is thus a very different industry which has given a rapturous reception to *The Quince Tree Sun*.

Objects suspended in light

Antonio López, whose reputation as a maverick rivals that of Erice himself, is the third of Erice's enigmatic father figures. Shown in the credits sequence stretching and priming his own canvas, he displays an amiable modesty and unworldliness. His walled garden, in which he confronts with singular intensity the small quince tree he has chosen to paint, is the latest in a series of enclosed spaces in which Erice plays out his subtly modulated dramas. And suspended equivocally between documentary and fiction, the film is Erice's most reflexive commentary yet on the nature of representation.

López (like Erice) obsessively pursues an impossible project: the reproduction of a constantly changing model. Like Erice, too, he pays particular attention to framing, criss-crossing the garden with a grid of threads and leaving tiny traces of paint on leaves and fruit. But the artist's quixotic enterprise (the attempt to hit a moving target in notably inclement weather) is doomed to failure: after a month of labour López will be forced to abandon the painting on which he has worked so heroically.

Unlike López, Erice finished his picture. An unscripted film which began as a television short became a feature over two hours in length which was awarded the prestigious critics' prize at Cannes. Yet this most abstract of Erice's projects is also his

most historical. As López paints, his Radio relays news bulletins about the Gulf war; Polish labourers remodel the studio; Chinese visitors drop in. Occasionally the camera pans beyond the painter's sanctuary over the urban detritus of Madrid or lingers on lonely night-time windows in shots compared by the director to Edward Hopper's empty cityscapes. In its apparently random references to the world outside the garden, *The Quince Tree Sun* testifies to the new cosmopolitanism of Spain, to its entry into anxious urban anomie. It is a long way from the villages of Castile.

The final sequence recreates a childhood dream of López in which the lushly rotting flesh of quince fruit points unequivocally to death, "under a light which turns everything to ashes." Erice shows us an abandoned camera and arc light looming over the tiny tree. It is his clearest allegory of the dangers of cinema, of its unerring tendency to corrupt the real. And it is not too far fetched to see Erice's fanatical perfectionism (like López's) as an attempt to defer death and to forestall mortality.

The image which remains of Erice's cinema is of objects suspended in light: the child's face before the screen, the pendulum by the window, the quince in the pale autumn sun. However, it is not enough to say that such images are 'haunting' or 'magical'. Searching for light, hunting for time, Erice pursues that curious combination of movement and stasis (sequence and frame) which is inherent in cinema. To say that he does not achieve his ambition or cannot achieve it alone is by no means to belittle his achievement. Rather it is to acknowledge that the purity of art cinema is never unsullied by commercial interests, that the isolation of the auteur is a fiction which must be submitted to analysis. Erice reminds us of how much we have lost in a time when the rapture of cinema has fallen out of fashion.

With the release of a remake of zombie film 'Night of the Living Dead', Steve Beard reflects on these low-class movie monsters

NO PARTICULAR PLACE TO GO

● The vampire, the werewolf, the Frankenstein monster, the Egyptian mummy, even the stalk-and-slash killer – these fabulous creatures of cinema have all had their chroniclers and mythologists. But what of the humble zombie? With Tom Savini's remake of George Romero's seminal 1968 horror film, *Night of the Living Dead*, the zombie, like the vampire or mummy, has returned from the other side of the grave. But it lacks the singular magnificence of a Dracula or a King Tut. "Zombies are the real lower-class citizens of the monster world and that's why I like them," Romero has said. Zombies always hunt in packs; they are blood-thirsty automatons who add to their numbers by feeding on human flesh. Individually, they are slow, stumbling and weak. Collectively, they are a rampaging mob of clawing hands and gnashing teeth.

Savini's remake of Romero's classic, apart from being shot in colour, sticks very close to the original. The set-up is basically the same: a group of squabbling survivors take refuge from their zombie persecutors in a remote farmhouse and try to make it through the night. Savini, who worked as the special effects artist on Romero's two sequels to *Night of the Living Dead*, doesn't come close to expanding on the role of the zombie in the 90s and misses out on the opportunity to draw parallels between the image of the zombie as surplus human capacity processed through the system as grotesque 'social waste' and conscious fears about mass unemployment in today's recessionary climate. Romero, by contrast, really shook things up.

Romero completely transformed the zombie mythology he inherited from the voodoo movies of the 30s and early 40s. *White Zombie*,

Revolt of the Zombies, *King of the Zombies*, *Revenge of the Zombies*, *Voodoo Man*: these gothic shockers all used the same formula. Typically, Bela Lugosi would be the evil sorcerer who ran a Caribbean sugar plantation, while the zombies would be the workforce of resurrected corpses he controlled with his 'devil doll'. Shuffling, blank-eyed, anonymous, they provided what James B. Twitchell has called some of the "most concussive images" in film history. He goes on: "If the audience of the Depression thought the blank stares of the bread-liners were unsettling, these images make them seem tame. It is not death that is macabre; it is living death."

Romero gave the imagery extra bite. He is almost entirely responsible for the familiar incarnation of the zombie as ghoulish cannibal. Or as Kim Newman puts it: "The most obvious and immediate effect of the success of *Night of the Living Dead* was a sudden epidemic of inferior flesh-eating zombie films." These include Ted V. Mikels' *The Astro-Zombies* (1969) starring John Carradine; Ken Wiederhorn's *Shock Waves* (1970, UK title: *Almost Human*), starring Peter Cushing as the leader of a Nazi zombie army; Benjamin Clark's *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things* (1972), a teens-in-jeopardy horror spoof; and Bob Clark's *Dead of Night* (1972), a return-from-Vietnam cartoon allegory. Meanwhile, the post-punk black farce of Dan O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead* (1985) gave rise to camp genre-benders like *Raiders of the Living Dead* (1987), *The Video Dead* (1987) and *Chopper Chicks in Zombietown* (1990).

Romero also gave the zombie a new lease of cinematic life by making it resonate with the implication of social plague. But he was not the first to bring it back home. The spate of science-fiction monster movies which appeared in the 50s used the glassy-eyed trance of zombiedom as an image of alienation. In movies like Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and Gene Fowler Jr's *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (1958), aliens take over the bodies of innocent small-town consumers in preparation for a mass invasion. What gives them away to the vigilant observer is not so much their lack of animation as their trivial deviations from the social norm (working late in the basement, failing to turn on the car headlights). These are films whose political unconscious has less to do with the Red menace or McCarthyism than with the social conformism demanded by Fordist economic integration. The anxiety they express is not that some Americans might be secretly different, but that all Americans might be obscurely the same – serial instances of such contemporary stereotypes as William H. Whyte's *Organization Man*.

Romero's zombies are different. No longer representative of the faceless masses of Fordism, they instead refer to the hollowing out of this constituency by a post-Fordist organisation of labour. Romero's zombies stand in for those workers and consumers who, since the flash-point year of 1968 when the crisis in the old Fordist system first blew up, have been thrown on the scrap heap. Economically extinct, socially displaced, they return to devour those

who have survived them. Less the lower-class citizens of the monster world and more the disenfranchised underclass of the material world, they are a projection of post-modern capitalism's worst anxieties about itself.

The point about Romero's film compared to Siegel's is that the zombies of *Night of the Living Dead*, far from being anonymous, are heterogeneous. They are lean, fat, old, young, male, female; they are dressed in suits, jeans, pyjamas, slips, nightgowns and, in one case, nothing at all; they are rural, metropolitan, suburban. The implication – one that has become more transparent to more people since 1968 – is that nobody is immune from the social restructuring of post-Fordism. Everybody's job is potentially at risk.

This is especially apparent in Romero's two successor movies to *Night of the Living Dead*. In *Dawn of the Dead*, which restages the siege narrative of the original film inside a shopping mall, and *Day of the Dead*, which shifts the scenario underground into a military bunker, the social typology of the zombies is absurdly specific. In *Dawn of the Dead* alone there is a nun, an airforce general, a Hare Krishna disciple, a softball player, an insurance salesman and a clutch of highly individuated grotesques. Because the film is set in a shopping mall, critics have been tempted to view its zombies as parodic consumers. Romero has suggested as much himself. But *Dawn of the Dead* is not a satire on the Fordist consumer society, however much it thinks it is. It is a film unaware of its real political significance.

If the methodology of Fredric Jameson is adopted and the film is treated as a 'dream-text' with a political unconscious buried beneath a layer of critical defence mechanisms, then it is possible to see that the zombie is a figure of an expanding post-Fordist underclass filtered through a bourgeois imaginary of disgust. Exiles from the shrinking borders of that part of society which still works, Romero's zombies are seen as moaners, idlers, scavengers, dummies. They are presented as the scum of the earth; in other words, they indicate a hysterical class fantasy. Raw, blown apart, exposed, they have been completely desubjected (they do not even qualify for a point-of-view shot). The survivalists of *Dawn of the Dead* are permitted their cameos of consumer boredom (playing poker with thousands of useless dollars, getting dressed up with no place to go). The zombies are permitted only to wander. If they get in the way, they are run over, shot, sideswiped or otherwise pulped.

All very ironic, given that the only material difference between the two classes of bodies is that, in Paul Virilio's terms, they are "metabolic vehicles" that move at different speeds. The zombies want to consume as much as their human counterparts; it's just that they've forgotten how. Unlike the somnambulist zombies of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the zombies of *Dawn of the Dead* are inept. They bump into each other, fall over, stumble up the escalators, knock over display cabinets and crush goods underfoot. The confusion is all very comical, but it is not a satire on mindless consumerism. It is an oblique commentary on precisely the



The living dead: director George Romero surrounded and mobbed by his zombie admirers

loss of those smooth reflexes sustaining the Fordist economy. The zombies are victims of a selective abandonment of the "metabolic vehicle" of the masses by post-modern capitalism. They are demobilised Organization Men.

Day of the Dead is a more traditional film than either *Night of the Living Dead* or *Dawn of the Dead*. The underground military base that serves as its location is presented as the microcosm of a familiar dystopian society rather than, as in the previous films, a social terrain which it is the purpose of the action to dispute. The zombies are a poor lot as well. Having been re-absorbed into a conventional military machine by the leaders of the base, they don't signify much more than the proletariat in chains. Certainly, it's no surprise to see Frankenstein's monster dragged out of the myth pool during the course of the film (Bub, the "zombie with a soul"). It's almost as if Romero has gone back to basics and made *Day of the Dead* as *White Zombie* with added gore.

There are a couple of fragments in the film, however, which are more interesting, appearing as they do to connect a post-Fordist political unconscious with the material conditions of film-making. The first is the scene where a couple of lower-echelon members of the base show off the Ritz, their kitsch facsimile of a mass leisure environment, complete with lounge, sunshade and wooden trellis. The bunker scenes were all filmed in an abandoned limestone mine in Pennsylvania, which since the end of the Second World War had been used as a storage facility for all sorts of consumer durables (boats, golf-carts, powdered milk, feature-film negatives). From industrial workplace to consumer garbage dump to film set – the

archaeological history of the site already anticipates the post-apocalyptic subtext of the movie. To that extent, the Ritz is a synecdoche of the collapse of the Fordist system.

The second loaded scene is the sequence at the beginning where a chopper lands in a zombie resort town in Florida and a scientist steps out to hail survivors. The streets are littered with cardboard boxes, old newspapers and abandoned cars, the elegant buildings are distressed and dirty, the whole place has seen better days. And then the zombies start appearing. Parodic tourists dressed in loud Hawaiian shirts and idiotic sun hats, they converge on the chopper and force it to leave. This sequence was filmed in Fort Myers, Florida, a core city suffering from urban blight as a result of capital flight to the outer suburbs in the 80s. The film-makers did not have to do much to dress their set. History had done it for them.

Romero has said of *Day of the Dead*: "The community I had in the original script was always sort of representative of the new west or Florida, where cities now collapse in ten years instead of 200." He was also much more specific about the exact social composition of this community in his original script. One element which never made it into the finished film was the idea of a surplus human population living in sleazy fenced-in stalags reminiscent of Florida retirement condos. Described by Romero as a "cesspool of human dregs", its members are either used as slave labour or as fodder for the zombie soldiers. What is clear here is that the post-Fordist underclass has become completely detached as an unconscious political referent from the figure of the zombie. Now, it is simply referred to by the

grotesque fantasy of "human dregs". It is no surprise to learn that this hysterical outburst was revised for the film.

But the semiotic instability of the zombie was there from the beginning. One significant difference between Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and Savini's remake is that Savini permits a multitude of conflicting explanations for the zombie plague, from chemical weapons to the hole in the ozone layer. This is something Romero wanted to do in the original, but he didn't have sufficient confidence in his audience and ran with a B-movie cliché about radiation from Venus. Co-writer John Russo has said: "At the time, every film we went to see in that genre had an explanation. It seemed that the masses couldn't live without some sort of explanation. So we gave them one." But the Fordist masses were not the individuals who would turn *Night of the Living Dead* into a cult hit on the midnight circuit. Did the film-makers really have such contempt for their audience?

The suspicion remains that Romero failed to understand the fascination of his zombies. But then, maybe so did his audience. By the time he came to make two sequels to *Night of the Living Dead*, he had no trouble casting his zombies: people would come from miles around for a chance to impersonate the living dead. Savini set up a make-up assembly line for applying masks and paint to the hundreds of zombie extras required for each film. A technician who worked on *Day of the Dead* has commented: "People would come and stay all night. It was something to do. Instead of going to a midnight showing of *Rocky Horror*, they'd come to the mall and be zombies." Who were these people? Members of a post-Fordist underclass eager to exhibit the signs of their abjection? An avant-garde generation of consumers mocking at the conformist habits of the past? Were they zombies or were they survivalists?

Maybe they were indeed the Fordist masses of Romero's fond imagining, come out for one last time to rehearse the spectacle of their own extinction by processing themselves through Savini's assembly lines. It would certainly fit the profile of Romero's career. He started out making commercials for US Steel, Alcoa, Heinz and Duke beer, outfits similar to those whose mass-produced commodities he would later trash in *Dawn of the Dead*. His production company, Image Ten, was set up in 1963 within earshot of Pittsburgh's declining steel mills, and occupied an ambivalent position in the economic fabric of the town. Parasitic upon the local branches of big Fordist companies for employment, it operated flexible post-Fordist labour practices and was staffed by a small 'family' of highly-skilled workers who treated the office as a home from home. It was within this makeshift environment that *Night of the Living Dead* was conceived, financed, filmed and edited. Schooled in selling corporations a flattering image of themselves, Romero took his revenge by defaming the reputation of the people they served.

'Night of the Living Dead' opens on 2 April and is reviewed on page 51 of this issue

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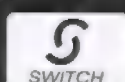
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Phosphorescent milk

Twenty years ago, an impressionable youth, I read Truffaut's exchange with Hitchcock in which the latter famously describes the glass of milk Cary Grant takes upstairs in *Suspicion*: "I put a light right inside the glass because I wanted it to be luminous." On reading those words I experienced what psychologists call an apophany, an abnormal consciousness of significance. "I understood that the object contained a message for me, and I should decipher it" (Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*).

Conscious effort was not the appropriate response to what was a summons to the unconscious. I proceeded by a kind of somnambulism. With the infinite patience of idleness, I collected quotes which seemed to elucidate or compound the mystery, jotting them down when I came upon them by chance in the course of my general reading. Poets (Rilke, Yeats, Cocteau, Jack Spicer), like mediums, claim to take dictation from an Outside. The unconscious is an Outside within us all. "The words found or discovered in a book are one level of a dictation" (Robin Blaser, *The Practice of Outside*). Objective corroboration by a host of disparate authors confirmed my unconscious hunch: Hitchcock's glass was luminous because its contents were numinous.

"The appearance of light without fire or

Cartoonist and songwriter Peter Blegvad remembers Hitchcock's 'Suspicion' – and the luminous milk with all its properties of light and dark

without heat is immediately imbued with a supernatural significance" (E. Newton Harvey, *A History of Luminescence*). When Hitchcock put a light inside the glass ("because I wanted [the audience] to think it was poisonous"), he produced a kind of anti-light, with properties normally associated with darkness. A cold, wet, colourless light, which hid more than it made visible.

This would not have been the case had the glass contained any other liquid – even such association-rich fluids as wine, blood, ink, oil or water. These are all outgoing, extrovert substances. In Cocteau's *Orphée*, Jean Marais takes dictation from the radio in Death's Rolls-Royce. One of the enigmatic transmissions he receives is the phrase: "a single glass of water illumines the world." A world lit by H₂O would be a daylight world of sparkling clarities, at the opposite end of the spectrum from the world a single glass of milk illumines with its anti-light: an inner world of shadows, where there is "more reality in what is hidden than in what is visible" (Gaston Bachelard, *La Terre et les rêveries du repos*).

Roland Barthes, in *Wine and Milk*, writes: "Wine is mutilating, surgical, it transmutes and delivers; milk is cosmetic, it joins, covers, restores. Moreover, its purity, associated with the innocence of the child, is a token

of strength which is not revulsive, not congestive, but calm, white, lucid, the equal of reality. Some American films, in which the hero, strong and uncompromising, did not shrink from having a glass of milk before drawing his avenging Colt, have paved the way for this new Parsifalian myth... milk remains an exotic substance."

Here Barthes presents milk in the beneficent guise promoted by dairies. But like whiteness, milk is antithetical. Beneath the surface guise of purity, innocence, strength and calm lies another milk, "phosphorescent from all its encounters with darkness" (Antonin Artaud). Just as "the deep secret of innocence is that it is also anxiety" (Kierkegaard), so the deep secret of milk is, in the words of French poet Jacques Audiberti, its "secret blackness". By putting a light in it, Hitchcock demonstrated that the seemingly innocuous stuff can be sinister, its cold glow radioactive after its long journey up from the depths, a chthonic "blood mystery", an occult narcotic, a photosensitive emulsion, a weird glue related to sperm and ectoplasm, its whiteness connoting not only innocence and purity, but also, like Moby Dick's, corruption and vacuity.

"The grail broken,

the light gone from the glass,
we would make it

anew." (Robert Duncan, *Shadows*)

"It is like a glass of milk. We need the glass and we need the milk." (John Cage, *Lecture on Nothing*)

"Return to a Place Lit by a Glass of Milk" (Charles Simic, title of a book of poems)

So what 'message', if any, did these bits and pieces (I must have amassed a couple of hundred over the years) enable me to extract from Hitchcock's glass? Its light confirmed that a process was under way, like the light on a switch when the current is flowing. Jung called the process "individuation", the psyche's instinctive striving for wholeness. He compared it to the alchemist's quest for the *lapis* or philosopher's stone: "the glass corresponds to the *unum* *vas* of alchemy and its contents to the living, semi-organic mixture from which the lapis, endowed with spirit and life will emerge" (C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*). Hitchcock's glass had become for me a symbol of the integrated psyche, its unconscious and conscious aspects reconciled.

I'm aware that many might find my obsession unbearably pretentious. "You saw all this in a glass of milk?" As a last defence, and bringing us back to cinema, I'll close with these words by Luis Buñuel, with which I'm passionately in accord: "...this same glass, contemplated by different beings, can be a thousand different things, because each one charges what he sees with effectivity; no one sees things as they are, but as his desires and his state of soul make him see. I fight for the cinema which will show me this kind of glass, because this cinema will give me an integral vision of reality, will broaden my knowledge of things and people, will open up to me the marvellous world of the unknown, of all that which I find neither in the newspaper nor in the street." (*Cinema Instrument of Poetry*)



Secret blackness: Cary Grant in Hitchcock's *'Suspicion'*, with the deeply sinister glass of milk

Where angels fear to tread

David Robinson

Biopics loomed large in Berlin this year. The blockbuster exhibits, Danny De Vito's *Hoffa* and Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, despite dedicated performances by their stars, both obscure their subjects under a mass of production and inadequate scripts. Even David Mamet, *Hoffa*'s writer, can nod, it seems.

Derek Jarman's *Wittgenstein* provided an instructive antidote. With drastic simplification of means and dexterous wit, Jarman extracts the essence of Wittgenstein's eccentric life and complex thought. Jarman has always worked as a poet, using his imagination to infect the viewer's. Here, setting his characters against an infinite black background, he stimulates our imaginations to recreate for ourselves Vienna, Cambridge, Bloomsbury, war - far more vividly than any production designer could do. The film would have given Wittgenstein himself happy scope for linguistic investigation.

One of the most outstanding films was autobiographical - Mikhail Kalik's "memoir" *And the Wind Returns*. Kalik remains an extreme example of a career crushed by Soviet socialism. At least one of several films he made in the 60s, *Goodbye Boys*, is a masterpiece, but after being suppressed for a quarter of a century it remains little known. In 1971, unable to work any longer, Kalik managed to emigrate to Israel.

And the Wind Returns marks his own return, to St Petersburg and to creativity. The film relates his life story: growing up in a family of Jewish actors; nightmare years in a Siberian gulag after voicing feelings against the closure of the Yiddish theatre and the murder of Solomon Mikhoels; life at the Moscow Film School in the 50s; the intolerable pressures as his work is criticised for "pessimism" and "formalism", and anti-Semitism spreads.

The assured formal inventiveness of his earlier work is there in the new movie. The film moves freely in time, from the present of Kalik's return to Russia to the long-ago past, and assimilates old actuality material and quotations from his previous films, notably *Goodbye Boys*. The dramatic recreations of people from Soviet film history (Eisenstein, Yutkevitch, the party-line head of the film school, Gershchikov) sometimes calls for footnotes, but there are memorable moments. The boy Kalik is taken by his father to the Alma Ata studios, where *Ivan the Terrible* is being shot. A slightly camp Eisenstein bends the giant actor Nikolai Cherkassov (a miraculous lookalike) to his will; while on the side good Russians maliciously whisper and spit over the baleful influence of the Jews.

Dusan Makavejev too makes an exhilarating return to form with *Gorilla Bathes at Noon*, which deals with his favourite comic theme: the *mise en scène* of the great socialist illusion. He reverts to the technique of *Innocence Unprotected* and *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* - his own special collage of *objets trouvés*. Principal among these are the last two reels of the extravagant Stalinist popular epic *The Fall of Berlin* and the demolition of a colossal statue of Lenin in East Berlin.

Makavejev builds these elements into the story of a Russian officer - the fruit of the romantic union blessed by Stalin himself in the grand finale of *The Fall of Berlin* - who was accidentally left behind when the Soviet armies withdrew from East Berlin. The film is a comic post-mortem on the 40 lost years of Communism.

The cataclysmic aftermath of the changes in Eastern Europe figured in several other Berlin films. Detlev Buck's (mildly) comic road movie *No More Mr Nice Guy*, which again features a 'lost' Russian soldier, finds a lot of its humour in the uneasy transformations of East German society. And Thierry Ravelet and Alain Ferrari's moving documentary *Un Jour dans la mort de Sarajevo* vividly evokes the dreadful reality of ethnic cleansing.

The current chaos and despair in Romania has inspired a new vein of pungent black comedy. The cinema-proprietor protagonist of Mircea Daneliuc's brutal farce *The Conjugal Bed* will do anything to earn dollars - work in porno films, sell babies or even go into politics. Lucian Pintilie's *The Oak* (already featured in several festivals last year) is a violent horror comic about the life of a young woman during the last throes of the Ceausescu regime, facing the terrors of love and death, rape, both secret and not-so-secret police, and mortuaries where the freezers have broken down. Connoisseurs of Romanian verbal obscenity have a ball.

Berlin traditionally specialises in films on homosexual themes (not for nothing are its two main auditoria named after the most famous homosexuals in German cinema: Murnau and Fassbinder). Andrew Weeks and Ellen Fisher Turk's *Split: William to Chrysis - Portrait of a Drag Queen* is a hearteningly affectionate portrait of a chubby boy from the Bronx who transformed him-

'Kalik is taken by his father to the studios where 'Ivan the Terrible' is being shot. A camp Eisenstein bends the actor Nikolai Cherkassov to his will; while on the side good Russians spit over the baleful influence of the Jews'

self into the archetype of feminine glamour. As a courtesan Chrysis had a fling with Salvador Dali; eventually she died from cancer, a martyr to her breast implants.

Marc Huestis' *Sex Is...* is a wise and sombre debate on homosexuality in the age of Aids: "How can we continue to be vital sexual beings in the midst of death?" It is livened up with some hard-core embellishments which are perhaps unnecessary and risk losing the film the wider audience it deserves. *Silverlake Life: The View From Here* is a devastating portrait of a male couple dying, with undefeatable love and nobility, from Aids. The film was begun by one of the couple, Tom Joslin, and finished after his death by Peter Friedman. Paris Poirier's *Last Call at Maud's* is a nostalgic reminiscence of a San Francisco lesbian bar that helped its clients through decades of repression.

Notable shorts included Marlon Riggs' *No Regret*, in which five black gay men discuss their battle with Aids, and Isaac Julien's *The Attendant*, which realises the fantasies of a gallery attendant inspired by a painting called *Scene on the Coast of Africa*. Shown in the Forum of Young Cinema, Mark Rappaport's *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* is a witty exercise in cultural analysis, using film fragments to illuminate the disjuncture between Hudson's screen persona and his sexuality.

The sheer quantity of films made it impossible to see everything in the Forum of Young Cinema. But I would have no hesitation in passing on high recommendations for Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*, a low-budget essay on separation and the film-maker's Armenian heritage; Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick's documentary marathon *Manufacturing Consent - Noam Chomsky and the Media*; and for Adriana Aprà's film portrait *Rossellini visto da Rossellini*.



Growing up Jewish: Mikhail Kalik's *'And the Wind Returns'*

Tony Rayns

Unlike its chief rivals Cannes and Venice, which cling to dated and ever less tenable dreams of 'art cinema' and every year ritually lament the dearth of 'suitable' films, the Berlin Film Festival manages to represent the actual state of film-making around the world. Two obvious reasons for this come to mind. One is the diplomatic imperative: along with state funding comes the expectation that the festival will maintain a self-consciously 'liberal' stance, carefully balancing different national and political interests and paying lip-service to minorities of all stripes. The other is the presence of the invaluable Forum of Young Cinema as a key part of the festival structure; still true to its founding principles, the Forum goes into more areas where angels fear to tread than most festival programmers even know exist, and its explicit commitment to cutting-edge cinema sets a standard that the rest of the festival scrabbles to keep up with. Using this year's Berlinale as a measure, I can report that the screen characters who currently get audiences cheering are Asian gays, HIV-positive Caucasians, kids without hope, and crotchety old people. Truly, these are the good new days.

Of all the hundreds of movies that have tried to get inside the unguided-missile minds of lonely young men in crumbling inner cities, *Rebels of the Neon God* (Qing Shaonian Ne zha) strikes me as the truest and most tender. I was alerted to director Tsai Ming-Liang's talent several years ago, when the critic Peggy Chiao showed me a tape of his Taiwan television film *All Corners of the World* (Hai Jiao Tian Ya). A drama about a dysfunctional family of ticket-scalpers in Taipei's entertainment district, it showed exceptional skill in handling non-professional actors and hard-access locations.

But *Rebels* (Tsai's first feature) is more than merely talented or skilful. Using an absolute minimum of dialogue, it sets itself up as a study of father-son conflict but saves its keenest insights for the scenes in which the young protagonist leaves his parents and transfers his attention to a slightly older petty criminal, whom he views with a mixture of confused aggression and hero-worship. Tsai finds matchless poetic images for the self-absorbed, masturbatory world of these young men, never limiting himself to the banalities of realism and building his story through intricate and suggestive cross-cutting. But the film's devastating formal beauty doesn't eclipse Tsai's sense of the undercurrents that run through these lives; he is alert to everything from the young men's latent homoerotic feelings to their half-sceptical belief in Chinese mythology. The film offers no social or psychological solutions, but it views the problems with the kind of warmth and engagement that was once unique to Fassbinder.

Rebels of the Neon God has no gay content as such (although its central love/hate gesture is the vandalising of a motorbike, which includes spraying it with the word 'Aids'), but it is probably not coincidental that it arrives with a wave of gay-themed



The loneliness of city rooms: Tsai Ming-Liang's 'Rebels of the Neon God'

'Of all the hundreds of movies that have tried to get inside the unguided-missile minds of lonely young men, 'Rebels of the Neon God' strikes me as the truest and most tender'

movies from the Far East. 1992 was the year when Japan's gay men suddenly became visible, after a century and a half of conspiring in their own relegation to dark and undiscussed corners of society. In Berlin, though, their thunder was stolen by the Taiwanese-American director Ang Lee, whose marriage-of-convenience comedy *The Wedding Banquet* (Xiyan) wound up sharing the Golden Bear with an anodyne but well-acted art movie from China.

Lee's film, a crowd-pleaser of the order of *Strictly Ballroom*, finds a gay Taiwanese yuppie in Manhattan wedding a penniless art student from Shanghai; he needs to get his parents off his back, and she needs a Green Card. For an extended exercise in wish-fulfilment, complete with a gratuitously sexy happy ending, *The Wedding Banquet* cuts surprisingly close to the bone of Chinese anti-gay prejudice. It avoids caricature, respects everyone's point of view and has a genuinely touching coming out scene. The director himself puts in a cameo appearance to assert that he set out to attack "5,000 years of sexual repression".

Interestingly, all three Japanese gay movies in Berlin insisted on seeing their gay male characters in relation to straight women. (Whether this is because Japanese directors are now where Dearden and Relf were when they made *Victim* or for some reason culturally specific to Japan is up for debate.) The films are squarely problem-oriented: the closeted young doctor in George Matsuoaka's *Twinkle* (Kira Kira Hikaru) marries an alcoholic woman with low self-esteem and cannot hold together his affair with his student boyfriend; the young rent boy in Hashiguchi Ryosuke's *Slight Fever of a 20-Year-Old* (Hatachi no Binetsu) clings to a platonic girlfriend to convince himself he isn't gay, only to discover that her father is his client; the torrid lovers in Nakajima Takehiro's

Okoge avail themselves of a helpful woman's bedroom while she curls up in her living room with her Frida Kahlo book.

Okoge, made by a director twice the age of the other two, is the only one of these movies that achieves a plausible sense of the compromises and accommodations that are an integral part of Japanese gay life. Ironically, Japan has already produced the film-maker to put these nervous, recalcitrant movies into perspective: the young independent Oki Hiroyuki, whose work is not only openly gay but also radically subjective. Inexplicably, Oki was missing from the Berlin programme.

Cyril Collard's shattering, tumultuous *Savage Nights* (Les Nuits fauves), which is sure to repeat its French success everywhere else it plays, does for HIV what Disney did for Ravel in *Fantasia*. In what is apparently a semi-autobiographical movie, Collard himself plays a sero-positive man who enjoys *al fresco* rough-trade orgies while maintaining sexual relations with both a teenage girl and a latently fascist man. Politically incorrect to a fault, the film assaults audience expectations and screams to the four winds the agonies and perverse joys of living with Aids.

Alongside this, most accounts of heterosexual tribulations look timid. Sergei Bodrov's magical *I Wanted to See Angels* (Ja Chotela Uvidetj Angelov) cunningly evades the issue by seeing straight romance as one more broken promise of Moscow's night streets; the film is a Baudelairean glide through the city's weird subculture, centred on a would-be hit man who, at the age of 20, knows that he has already missed out on everything that matters. And Atom Egoyan's *Calendar* is witty enough to make a wry joke of its own obliqueness. Far less convoluted than previous Egoyan movies, it chronicles the break-up of a marriage between a photographer and his translator wife during a working trip to Armenia, but complicates matters by foregrounding questions of language, national identity and emotional empathy while pushing pain and politics into some off-screen void - where, of course, they echo.

The Forum also did useful work in saluting the resilience of the New Chinese Cinema in the wake of China's lurch to the left. A five-film series highlighted the work of two women directors, Li Shaohong and Ning Ying. Li showed her last two films, *Bloody Morning* (Xueshe Qingchen, an adaptation of Marquez' *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* fully rethought in Chinese terms) and *Family Portrait* (Sishi Bu Huo, from an original script by Liu Heng): one rural, one urban, both sociologically exact, cinematically literate and emotionally complex. Ning showed her second feature *For Fun* (Zhao Le), in which a retired stage doorman from the Peking Opera joins other pensioners in an amateur opera troupe but cannot unlearn the fractious bossiness that went with his old job. Li Shaohong's films are superb by any standards, and Ning Ying's has the kind of charm and humour last seen in movies from the Prague Spring. I guess things really are looking up in Beijing.

Memory lapse

Howard Schuman

Screening History

Gore Vidal, André Deutsch, £12.99, 96pp

This slim, overpriced volume appears at first glance to be a collection of three essays dealing with the effect of movies on Gore Vidal's sense of history. It is and it isn't. In fact, *Screening History* originated as a group of lectures given by Vidal at Harvard University, part of the Massey American Civilization series, from which Eudora Welty's wonderful *One Writer's Beginnings* (Faber and Faber) also emerged. Unlike Welty and Faber, however, Vidal and his publishers fail to acknowledge explicitly the provenance of his book. Nor has he followed Welty's honourable example by reworking the lectures into coherent essays. This laziness and evasion are all too characteristic of *Screening History* as a whole.

The first third of Lecture One, "The Prince and the Pauper", lurches aimlessly through quips about ahistorical America (the United States of Amnesia), a glimpse of Vidal's first visit to a movie theatre (he talked back to the actress on the screen as he walked down the aisle...), a glancing reference to how the Gulf War was stage-managed for CNN, some quick family sketches (aviation-industry dad, vodka-swigging flapperesque mother, beloved blind senator grandfather), which subsequently give way to a defence of his novel *Washington DC*, in which he fictionalised his political tribe. And then - as if realising he's been behaving like an ageing jazz musician desperately riffing, trying to find his way back to the tune - Vidal announces his theme in ringing tones: "So let us examine the way in which one's perceptions of history were - and are - dominated by illustrated fictions of great power, particularly those screened in childhood." At last he's getting down to it - or is he?

Vidal tells us that his most intense movie-going phase was between 1932 and 1939 and paints disarming portraits of the movie houses of his youth ("and the gum beneath the seats was always fresh Dentyne, a flavour new that year"). He reminds us that an inordinate amount of European history was produced by Hollywood in the 30s, but that apart from Westerns, almost no US history hit the screens. Why were the moguls, many of whom had escaped from European poverty, so anxious to green-light projects recreating the histories of the countries they'd left behind? Vidal avers he learned lasting history lessons from Hollywood, but how did he evolve from the kitsch of DeMille's *The Crusades* or Schoedsack's *The Last Days of Pompeii* to writing his fine historical novel *Julian*, or to acquiring knowledge about the real Crusades 'equal' to that of the great historian Sir Steven Runciman? He does not linger long enough on any of these pieces of information to enlighten us.

It comes as a relief when Vidal settles down for a while to explain his attraction to Warner Bros' version of Mark Twain's Tudor melodrama, *The Prince and the Pauper*. Twain's tale imagined the future Edward IV changing places with his pauper double, mingling with the masses, being taken captive, nearly killed in a wood, but being returned to his throne in the nick of time, thinner

but wiser about the disadvantages of being a member of the underclass. Vidal claims that the film encouraged his interest in English history, heightened his awareness of the Depression and the plight of contemporary paupers (Vidal was now almost a prince himself, his mother having remarried, this time to a rich stockbroker) and gave him his first insight into death as not-being when the Prince almost snuffs it.

None of this rings true. Why would a 30s movie addict need a historical *Boy's Own* adventure to give him a sense of the Great Depression when it permeated myriad Hollywood films from *Gold Diggers of 1933* to *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*? Not to mention the newsreels that accompanied those films. And as for his flash about the meaning of death, it seems unlikely he had not already seen Shirley Temple and other movie brats facing mortal danger.

No, the impact this film had upon young Gore seems more to do with his attraction to Billy and Bobby Mauch, the twin stars, who were "cute as a pair of bug's ears". Having admitted how cute the Mauches were, Vidal frantically backpeddles into an incoherent discussion of his fascination with twinship, the search for wholeness. He says, "I wanted to be myself twice," only to reverse it a few paragraphs later: "I wished I were either one of them, one of them mind you, I certainly did not want to be two of me." Something deliciously psycho-sexual is going on here which no amount of verbal camouflage can disguise.

Vidal is impartial - he treats every subject with equal superficiality. Lecture Two, for instance, promises to widen the Vidalian scope. "I have spent the last year screening not only movies but newsreels from the 30s and 40s, partly in preparation for these meditations and partly to make sense to myself why we were what we were and did what we did." He informs us that the battlelines between isolationists and interventionists were being drawn in newsreels in the run-up to the Second World War, but fails to tell us how. He seems to be embarking on a useful analysis of the monthly film documentary *The March of Time*, which "screened the world through the imperial American eyes of Christ-loving, red-fearing, people-hating Henry Luce."

But true to form, this insight peters out into a faintly amusing anecdote concerning Vidal père's appearance in one issue of *The March of Time* trying to explain how he - as President Roosevelt's Secretary of Aviation - had come to convert a British island in the Pacific into an American air base without the knowledge of Great Britain. And that's all, folks: soon we're off again, back to "90-minute entertainments" and a look at late-30s pro-Britain propaganda fictions, epitomised most famously by Alexander Korda's *Fire Over England*.

Vidal's discussion of *Fire Over England* simply reiterates what any movie buff already knows: in this rousing Elizabethan epic, Philip of Spain stands in for Hitler, Flora Robson as Gloriana represents English civilisation in peril and Laurence Olivier is indomitable EveryBrit. Otherwise, our lecturer reaches the uncontroversial conclusion that films like *Fire Over England* and *That Hamilton Woman* were designed to melt the brains and hearts of Americans towards little Britain. But Vidal states, quite accurately, that the majority of Americans remained

isolationist until Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Which seems to contradict one of his main points: "Through eye and ear we are both defined and manipulated by fictions of such potency that they are able to replace our own experience." The central thesis, that movie reality is stronger than experience, is never proved.

Screening History is a catalogue of missed opportunities and fuzzy thinking, as well as teasing sexual evasion. Vidal raises the spectre of pederasty at prep school and later all-male desire in an isolated army unit, but, as with his crush on the Mauch twins, he conjures up homoeroticism only to run away from it, like a small boy who has burnt his fingers on a flame. Although these lectures are sprinkled with familiar bitchy wit ("a narcissist is someone more attractive than you are"), they seem not to have been created by Gore Vidal at all but by one of his anagrams: Large Void.

Social codes

David Caute

Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition

Brian Neve, Routledge, £11.99, 285pp

Brian Neve's book begins by promising emphasis on a group within the generation of American film directors and writers born between 1906 and 1917 who made their passage to Hollywood via the red-hot radicalism of the New York theatre of the 30s, with the Depression, fascism and the war providing their "formative experiences". But as soon as the names come up - Elia Kazan, Orson Welles, Joseph Losey, Abraham Polonsky, Nicholas Ray, Robert Rossen, John Huston, Edward Dmytryk and Jules Dassin among them - one realises that this "group" was more a loose constellation of major and minor planets in separate orbits, with occasional convergences and collisions. Neve offers a somewhat problematic unifying factor: "A tendency to define their artistic aspirations in social terms." The result is several narratives searching uneasily for co-existence.

Neve then breaks his own tentative mould with a long discussion of Frank Capra, a director from an earlier generation whose affection for an honest, hard-working, idealistic middle America offset realistic problems with imaginary solutions. By the time Kazan, Losey and Rossen were reaching out to the Communist Party, Capra was gently recoiling from the bureaucratic implications of the New Deal. The bridge is flimsy. Neve is clearly more at

Red scare: Vladimir Sokoloff as Katinin in 'Mission to Moscow', right, one of the wartime pro-Soviet films picked on by HUAC





Down memory lane: Dirk Bogarde recalls camping it up in black leather in 'The Singer Not the Song'

home with political content than with artistic form, and most of his film-descriptions are script synopses rather than evocations of the visual experience of cinema. Even in his extended discussions of Kazan's *Viva Zapata!* and *On the Waterfront*, camerawork, decor and cutting tend to be bypassed. The exception is his excellent evocation of *America America*, which reveals the cinematic sensibility concealed elsewhere. One by-product of Neve's aesthetic reticence is a blurring of the immense gap in talent and achievement separating the films of Kazan and Welles from the workmanlike but genre-ridden scripts characteristic of the Hollywood Left.

Indeed, the Hollywood studios were less resistant to social message than to the demonically gifted auteurs who ran over budgets and shooting schedules, then fought the studio executives all the way to the theatre. The auteurs demanded the relative freedom they had enjoyed with the Group Theater or the Federal Theater Project, while Losey and other radicals travelled from New York to Hollywood like ballet dancers enlisting in the marines. Arriving at MGM, Losey wrote a bitter memo comparing his own servitude there to Kazan's privileges at Fox. While Kazan was able to work with first-class writers, Losey did not lay his hands on a script of genuine literary quality throughout the 30s and 40s.

The central paradox is how many of the 'progressive' writers quickly forgot Brechtian expressionism and the avant-garde Soviet theatre, readily absorbed the studios' rules about film genres, and transmitted their message with less subtlety than Western Union. But was it paradoxical? Neve rightly mentions the influence of radio on this generation of angry, talented messenger-boys; if one looks at Losey's agit-prop radio plays for NBC in 1943, or his short

film documentaries, propaganda already has art in a submission hold.

Obviously this generation became the principal target of the blacklist after 1947, and Neve would have been wrong to ignore it (even if this subject is beginning to suffer from over-exposure). He cites the oft-quoted survey by Dorothy Jones, *Communism in the Movies*, which showed how social themes reached their Hollywood peak in 1947, receded slightly during the minor blacklist of the late 40s, then almost vanished with the onset of McCarthyism. The blacklist silenced or exiled many of Neve's group. But HUAC was more interested in purging people than scripts – although, as Neve points out, the committee loved to equate the New Deal with Communism, and made capital out of the pro-Soviet films of the war years such as Michael Curtiz's *Mission to Moscow*. But as the purge perfected its own mechanism, it was all about names and guilt-by-association. A name became a name only when named before HUAC: congressional proceedings carried immunity from libel. Despite the ideological row over a scene from Losey's *The Boy with Green Hair*, at a time when he was already shadowed and bugged by the FBI as a Party member, he was able to continue to work without adverse personal publicity until he was subpoenaed by HUAC three years later.

This is a thoughtful and conscientious book, strong on information, strong on politics, weaker on film style than on peripheral context, inclined to subordinate the critical function to the encyclopaedic, and too much dominated by those twin lords of misrule, the index card and the thumbnail sketch. The notion of 'social' is surely over-elastic when extended to discussions of *A Place in the Sun* and *The Caine Mutiny*, while allowing only a few lines for Welles' minor masterpiece, *The Trial*. I would have liked more about less.

Voices of Britain

Sue Harper

Sixty Voices: Celebrities Recall the Golden Age of British Cinema

Brian McFarlane (ed), BFI Publishing, £35 (hb), £14.95 (pb), 260pp

Brian McFarlane's series of interviews with workers in the British film industry during the 40s and 50s provides clear documentation. The questions are well conceived and the illustrations particularly apposite. The material on under-researched characters is welcome, and the range of personnel helps us to construct a more comprehensive account of the period and to recognise the collaborative nature of the medium.

So far so good. But *Sixty Voices* is beset by the problems that assail all oral histories. As a form of enquiry, oral history seems to be 'written from below'; it is liable to sentimental interpretations, in which unofficial voices are presented as uttering the 'true facts'. And although memory is selective, recall is a rule-based activity. A distinction needs to be drawn between loosely constructed reveries and carefully directed interviews, each informed by different oral traditions and rhythms. Unless the sample of interviewees is evenly distributed along axes of gender, class, locale and profession, the selection appears unbalanced. And chance is a determining factor: the probity of the account depends on who has died inconveniently early, who was well disposed on a sunny day, and who had lunched not wisely but too well. Moreover, the means of transmission affect the message. Written interviews suffer in comparison with televised ones, in which non-verbal forms of communication carry information; the languages of movement, gaze, coughs and even pauses all modify the meaning of the spoken word. The recent in-depth television interviews with Billy Wilder on BBC 2's *Arena* are an excellent example of this.

Sixty Voices operates within a recognised convention of transcribed interviews in which phatic or paralinguistic elements are rarely acknowledged. It stands up well in comparison to such classic interview books as Jon Halliday's *Sirk on Sirk*, but is limited by its allegiance to celebrities – more than half the interviews are with actors. Of course, it is intriguing to learn how it felt to be directed by Leslie Arliss or Michael Powell, or that Dirk Bogarde, attired in black leather and astride a white horse in *The Singer Not the Song*, "did the whole thing for camp". But some of the 'star' evidence seems inconsequential. It might have been more valuable to hear from uncelebrated workers in the industry than to witness the hilarious reticence of Deborah Kerr or the churlish arrogance of Stewart Granger.

The interviews with producers and directors are more fruitful for historians. They provide information on neglected areas such as art direction and costume design, and yield useful insights into the varieties of mainstream film practice. From this evidence, distinctions can be drawn between those, like the Boultings, who despised the studio system, and those, like Roy Ward Baker, who thought there was "no point in making films for your 12 friends in Hampstead." The work of Val Guest, Lewis ▶

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SS2

◀ Gilbert and Ralph Thomas is at last accorded sustained attention, and some of the interviews fill important gaps: for example, those with Ronald Neame and Anthony Havelock-Allan add substantially to our knowledge about Cineguild. Orthodox histories tend to discount the contribution of women to the production process, so the interviews with Betty and Muriel Box provide a healthy corrective. Of course, what is not said is often as important as what is: John Davis' account of the demise of Independent Producers Ltd is disingenuous, to say the least.

While *Sixty Voices* provides valuable insights into the intentions of film-makers, we should always be wary, as D. H. Lawrence reminds us, of the "authorial thumb in the pan". The film text itself inevitably surpasses the meanings grafted on to it by its progenitors; and the film historian needs to balance other kinds of evidence against the *ipse dixit*.

Black eyes

Karen Alexander

Black Looks: Race and Representation
bell hooks. Turnaround Press.
£8.99, 200pp

Introducing her latest book, bell hooks quotes the Senegalese writer and film-maker Ousmane Sembène on the subject of his film *Camp Thiaroye*: "For people like us, there are no such things as models. We are called upon to constantly create our models. Colonialism means that we must always rethink everything." In *Black Looks*, it is the image and its potential for transformation – in music, advertising and fashion as well as film – that is the focus of such radical rethinking. The recurrent theme in this collection of essays is the mass media's denial of the existence of a critical black female subjectivity, a topic that some might be tempted to dismiss as *passé*. For hooks, such a view is part and parcel of the system that perpetuates our subjugation.

Cinema is central to hooks' project "to interrogate old narratives and suggest alternative ways to look at blackness and black subjectivity – and, of necessity, whiteness." Her arguments are challenging and forcefully put, but there is generous space for disagreement; the experience of reading *Black Looks* is one of constant immersion in a face-to-face, or voice-to-voice exchange. The author provides the premises and context of her argument while it is being made, so that faced with contentious analyses of films as diverse, for instance, as *Imitation of Life* and *Paris Is Burning*, we are obliged in turn to examine the grounds of our objections. A downside to these situated readings is that hooks does not need to take account of the circumstances of every other reader. It is frustrating for me, for example, that she does not identify which version of *Imitation of Life* disturbed her and her sister so deeply when they saw it as children.

We can share hooks' conviction that the primary task is to construct the terms for a radical black female spectatorship, and still be left with the feeling that to disagree with her readings is to fail in one's duty. Her oppositional stance towards mainstream Hollywood films such as *Imitation of Life* or *Heart Condition* and promotion of progres-

sive black independent film-making tend to exclude less confrontational responses. In 'The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators', for instance, she deals exclusively with the pleasures of deconstruction. Black women on this side of the Atlantic, however, grew up with comparatively few black images with which to engage critically. So while the young hooks and her sister were rejecting images they found too painful to look at, her Caribbean cousins here consumed them with naive wonder, not necessarily through a misguided desire to embrace white supremacist ideology, but to enjoy the 'simple' pleasures of looking.

Hooks is at her strongest when confronting white supremacy, as in the provocative essay 'Eating the Other', where she playfully reminds us of the slang meaning of 'a bit of the other' before challenging the 'progressive' desire of white males for black women or men. Rather than a liberalisation of attitudes towards non-white people, this is seen as an example of Otherness representing the locus of a more intense pleasure than does one's own race, thus leaving white supremacy intact. Hooks' critique is at its most incisive when it focuses on issues of desire. An essay about Madonna contains this axiomatic insight: "White folks who do not see black pain never really understand the complexity of black pleasure."

The complexity of black pleasure becomes evident in several of hooks' readings. If her take on super-model Naomi Campbell is rather one-dimensional as a critique of white male pleasure, her piece on the films of Oscar Micheaux, 'Celebrating Blackness', is more subtle: "Micheaux, fascinated by what I call 'a politics of pleasure and danger,' focused... on racialised sexual politics as they informed the construction and expression of desire between black heterosexual couples, as well as interracial sexual bondings... Focusing on womanising and vamping, Micheaux's work 'exploits' conventional constructions of good and bad sexuality as he simultaneously 'toys' with the idea of transgression."

Hooks' readings of black independent films, both British and American, are perceptive, and her analysis of Hollywood's subordinating and colonising strategies is illuminating as well as scathing. But it is not only for what she has to say on the subject of cinema and race that *Black Looks* is so effective. Her oppositional gaze is never more unsettling than when it is turned on her readers, becoming a powerful model for our rethinking our own sense of why and how we look.

Situation comedy

Amanda Lipman

Levinson on Levinson
David Thompson (ed), Faber and Faber.
£8.99, 170pp

The latest subject of Faber's directors series is the US independent-turned-mainstream Barry Levinson. In a series of conversations with David Thompson – presented as a monologue interspersed with editorial notes – Levinson is chattily autobiographical, though less analytical than others in the series. There's a reason for this: while the likes of Schrader, Scorsese or Cronen-



Communication breakdown:
Danny DeVito in Levinson's
'Tin Men', a film that plays
with macho dynamics in
male relationships

berg consider themselves auteurs, Levinson is what Thompson rather flatteringly terms "a throwback to the classy studio director". Nevertheless, Levinson does try to have his cake and eat it by working up a directorial identity through his loose trilogy of Baltimore films: *Diner*, *Tin Men* and *Avalon*. Not only is he most inspired when discussing these "personal" movies – written around his own experiences or those of his family – but he uses them to bring together the areas of film-making that he claims interest him most strongly.

First there is the Levinson trademark: his engagingly naturalistic dialogue, which is at its sharpest in *Diner*. Explains Levinson: "My feeling has always been that dialogue is in fact action if you handle it correctly." To accentuate the semi-documentary feel of conversation, he reveals, he would use two cameras on a scene simultaneously, giving an added immediacy and veracity to cutting and reaction shots. The three films also deal loosely with Levinson's avowed thematic interest: communication. While *Diner* and *Tin Men* both play wickedly with the way macho dynamics lead to frustrated relationships, *Avalon* looks at how communication within the family has deteriorated in the increasingly insular, television-bound twentieth century.

Of course, these concerns are not confined to the Baltimore films and Levinson offers many examples of the way they percolate those he directed but did not write. In *Good Morning, Vietnam*, for example, Robin Williams was allowed to improvise in a way his real-life counterpart DJ Adrian Cronauer never did; in *Rain Man*, it was Levinson's idea to make Dustin Hoffman's autistic character use comedy seriously to indicate his inability to communicate.

As Thompson points out, Levinson can be sentimental – as the worst moments of *The Natural* and *Rain Man* demonstrate. But for the most part, his films have an ironic undertone sparked off by situation and unfolding through the dialogue. So perhaps it's not entirely surprising to learn that he cut his teeth as a comedy writer, working with Marty Feldman, Carol Burnett and Mel Brooks.

There are no great struggles to reach the top in the Barry Levinson story. Mulling over the unexpected success of *Good Morning, Vietnam*, he comments: "So now I'm a big commercial union director whereas before I was labelled as a kind of fringe director. It's funny and strange." By his own admission, Levinson has enough hard-

◀ nosed practicality to enable him to slip easily into the commercial world – having deplored the studios' lack of confidence in "personal" movies like *Awalon*, he concedes that he understands why they would rather make *RoboCop*.

While he comes over as affable, modest and breezily readable, Levinson is never passionate. Even remarks about the personal films are measured, while the nearest he gets to invective is a muted defence of his liberal political position against Pauline Kael's accusation of Reaganism. Perhaps this has some bearing on why it is becoming harder to get excited about a Barry Levinson movie. Even Levinson himself seems to have less to say about his most recent films: he enthuses over James Toback's bristling script and the quality of the acting in *Bugsy* (undoubtedly its best features); he enthuses about the extravagant design in *Toys*. But somewhere along the way he seems to have forgotten that there's more to movie-making than this.

It's interesting to discover that *Toys* – which he co-wrote with his first wife Valerie Curtin – was set to be his first project, before it was shelved by Fox. It certainly begs the question of whether, directed by a younger, less successful Levinson, it would have been different from the turgid, sentimental affair it has become. Because despite any number of interesting stories in this book, and despite Levinson's past credentials, there's a whiff of complacency here. Thompson does his best to convince us of Levinson's talent, but it's all nostalgic stuff. And at the point at which the story should come full circle and reclaim its old magic, sadly, it reads more like an unwavering descent into mediocrity.

No drama

Andrew Higson

New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in American and British Film
Brian McFarlane and Geoff Mayer,
Cambridge University Press,
£35 (hb), £11.95 (pb), 259pp

McFarlane and Mayer's book is a useful, if flawed, addition to recent academic work on national cinemas. The subtitle is significant – there is as much, if not more, about Hollywood and Britain here as there is about Australia. Historically, Hollywood has played a formative role in our understanding of what constitutes cinema; to neglect its relationship to other national movements can give rise to some misleading conclusions.

The authors are interested both in what makes new Australian cinema unique, and in the ways it draws on pre-existing cinematic traditions. The first section deals with the influence of classical Hollywood narrative on recent Australian films. The argument follows the lines promoted by David Bordwell et al in *Classical Hollywood Cinema and Narration in the Fiction Film*, but inflects this with the contention that classical Hollywood narratives draw heavily on the conventions of melodrama, with its polarised dramatic and moral structures.

McFarlane and Mayer claim that "The Australian cinema has maintained an ambivalent attitude to this narrative system, rarely fully embracing it or alternative

narrative systems." Instead of following the more familiar line that other national cinemas simply mimic Hollywood, the authors berate new Australian cinema for the failure of so many of its films to follow through the melodramatic implications of their narratives and to meet audience expectations.

The second section compares the formation of new Australian cinema with attempts to build a viable national cinema in Britain in the 40s and 50s. In contrast to the previous section, an effort is made to identify the distinctive characteristics of Australian and British films. These include a pictorialist and/or realist *mise en scène*; loose episodic narratives with a concomitant emphasis on character, atmosphere, place – and authenticity – rather than narrative action and resolution; and a preference for adaptations which serves to align cinema with an established and prestigious indigenous literary tradition. McFarlane and Mayer also note a number of films which go out of their way to imagine Australia as a national community with unique cultural traits – but it is surely wrong to assume, as they seem to, that American movies do not also explore what it is to be American and promote ideas of American national identity.

Another of the characteristics of new Australian – but also British – cinema which McFarlane and Mayer identify is the refusal of what they call "full-blown melodrama". Here a problem arises, because whereas the logic of the first section is to see this as a failure, the second sees it as a deliberate aesthetic strategy intended precisely to establish difference from the classical model. Whereas the first section is premised on the idea that to be popular, Australian cinema must meet the genre expectations of the mainstream audience, the second describes something closer to a middle-class art cinema. Given the elitist assumptions of this cinema, it is surely inevitable that the moral certainties, dramatic structures and climactic resolutions of melodrama are treated with suspicion rather than wholeheartedly embraced in recent Australian films. It might therefore have made more sense to look more closely at movies such as John Duigan's *One Night Stand* or Jane Campion's *Sweetie* which have ended more equivocally on images of pain, powerlessness, alienation or defeat – images which, as McFarlane and Mayer note, have been explored by Graeme Turner in *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of the Australian Narrative* as important elements in Australian cultural traditions.

The unevenness of the book manifests itself in other ways. At times, the author of section two repeats material that has been adequately covered in section one. At other times, he uses quite different modes of textual analysis – Bordwell seems to have been jettisoned, for instance. It is odd, too, that similarities between new Australian cinema and European art cinema, which might have provided a third context, are noted without being followed through. But the authors are clearly more fascinated by American melodrama and British cinema. The detailed material on three American melodramas seems unnecessary, while much of the discussion of British cinema (with the exception of the section on popular melodrama) is either too familiar or in urgent need of revision.

shorts

Malcolm X: The Great Photographs

Text by Thulani Davis, Stewart, Tabori & Chang, £30 (hb), £14.99 (pb), 167pp
A fascinating and beautifully produced account of Malcolm X between 1960 and his death in 1965, told through striking black and white photographs. Those taken by journalists for the press are offset by others taken by the likes of Eve Arnold and Henri Cartier Bresson, and by Robert Haggins and Gordon Parks, whom Malcolm X entrusted with the task of providing alternative coverage to that of the white media. Davis' introduction examines the legend and the reality of this icon of black politics, placing him in historical context, and the book includes a detailed chronology of his life and work.

The Politics of Popular Representation:

Reagan, Thatcher, AIDS, and the Movies

Kenneth MacKinnon, Associated University Presses, £26.95, 257pp

A study of US and British politics during the 80s which uses popular English-language movies of the last two decades as evidence of the influence of the right on our conceptions of the family and sexuality. MacKinnon argues that New Right and Christian fundamentalist thinking profoundly affected social attitudes towards AIDS, creating a health disaster which hardly surfaced in the movies, except obliquely in horror films. According to MacKinnon, the AIDS imagery in 80s popular movies provides testimony to the phobia that helped to produce the health crisis.

Filmmaking by the Book: Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation

Millicent Marcus, The Johns Hopkins University Press, £36.50 (hb), £12 (pb), 313pp

In this scholarly work, Marcus draws on semiotics, psychoanalysis and feminism to explore the relationship between literary narrative and cinematic discourse in Italian cinema. She looks at key works by Visconti, De Sica, Pasolini, Fellini and the Taviani brothers to demonstrate how these cinematic imaginations transform literary texts in the interests of resolving individual artistic problems. Case studies include *La terra trema*, *The Leopard*, *Two Women*, *The Gospel According to St Matthew* and *the Decameron*.

MGM: When the Lion Roars

Peter Hay, Virgin Publishing, £36, 335pp

A lavishly produced history of MGM's golden era between 1925 and 1959. Hay has trawled the archives of the Academy Foundation to provide an inside look at legendary figures such as Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg, costume designer Adrian, production designer Cedric Gibbons, producer David O. Selznick, directors King Vidor and Minnelli, and many other artists and technicians. The volume also includes profiles of the studio's greatest stars.

Etienne-Jules Marey: A Passion for the Trace

François Dagognet, translated by Robert Galeta with Jeanine Herman, The MIT Press, £24.25, 204pp

A study of inventor Marey (1830-1904), an influential figure in the history of photography. His sophisticated techniques for recording motion coincided with new ideas about the relationship between the body and the machine. Henri Bergson, Futurism and Marcel Duchamp were all indebted to his scientific philosophy. The book, which includes a bibliography and index, is illustrated by stunning and rare black and white photographs.

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REVIEWS

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Accidental Hero

USA 1992

Director: Stephen Frears

Certificate
15
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Columbia Pictures
Executive Producer
Joseph M. Caracciolo
Producer
Laura Ziskin
Associate Producer
Sandy Isaac
Production Supervisor
Bonnie Arnold
Production Co-ordinator
Shari Leibowitz
Unit Production Manager
Joseph M. Caracciolo
Location Managers
Amy Ness
Stephen Andrzejewski
Casting
Howard Feuer
Juliet Taylor
Assistant Directors
Louis D'Esposito
Nina Kostroff-Noble
David Hallinan
Karyn McCarthy
Screenplay
David Webb Peoples
Story
Laura Ziskin
Alvin Sargent
David Webb Peoples
Director of Photography
Oliver Stapleton
Colour
Technicolor
Camera Operator
George Kohut
24 Frame Videos & Graphic Displays
Video Image:
Rhonda C. Gunner
Richard E. Hollander
Gregory L. McMurry
John C. Wash
Supervisor:
David M. Hofflich
Technical Supervisor:
Steve Howard
Technical Director:
Douglas Degrazzio
Special Visual Effects
Dream Quest Images
Executive Producer:
Keith Shartle
Producer:
Dennis Hoffman
Supervisor:
Mat Beck
Production
Co-ordinator:
Daniel J. Lombardo
Optical Supervisor:
Jeff Matakovich
Optical Line-up:
Georgie Huntington
Animation Supervisor:
Jeff Burks
Rotoscope Artist:
James Valentine
Animation
Co-ordinator:
Anjelica Casillas
Digital Compositing:
Howard Burdick
VistaVision Camera
Operator:
Chuck Schuman
Bluescreen Technician:
Rick Johnson
Special Mechanical
Design:
Tom Hollister
Louis Lindwall
Editor
Mick Audsley
Production Designer
Dennis Gassner
Art Director
Leslie McDonald
Set Design
Gina B. Cranhan
Lawrence A. Hubbs
Set Decorator
Nancy Haigh

Set Dressers
Tinker Linville
Chris Spellman
Production Illustrator
Paul Power
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Art Brewer
Special Effects
Mike Meinardus
Greg Curtis
Sam Barkan
Music
George Fenton
Music Extracts
"Theme From Close Encounters of the Third Kind" by John Williams
Orchestrations
Jeff Atmajian
Music Editor
Michael Connell
Music Consultant
Jeffrey Pollack
Songs
"Heart of a Hero" by and performed by Luther Vandross. The Los Angeles Children's Choir; "The Man I Love", "Hoping That Someday You'd Care" by George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin
Costume Design
Richard Hornung
Wardrobe
Supervisor:
Christopher Lawrence
Nancy Takehara
Kaye Nottbusch
Make-up
Christina Smith
Monty Westmore
Title Design
Julian Rothenstein
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation
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Ronald Judkins
Music: John Richards
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
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Bill Benton
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Hamilton Sterling
John Joseph Thomas
Foley Supervisor
Mark Pappas
Stunt Co-ordinator
Gary Jensen
Stunts
Keith Tellez
John Gillespie
Bill Bates
Doug Coleman
Gene Hartline
Lance Gilbert
Pamela Bebermeyer
Christine Anne Baur
Jimmy H. Burk
Michael Carr
Jimmy Lewis
Mickey Gilbert
Troy Gilbert
Ben Jensen

Ethan Jensen
Donna Evans
Diane Wilson
Dave Powledge
Simone Boissuerree
Kim Koscki
Ray Saniger
Gary Jensen
Chloe Jensen
Ken Bates
Tony Cecere
Hank Calia
Donna Garrett
George Colucci
Dennis Madalone
Cherie Rae

Cast
Dustin Hoffman
Bernie Laplante
Geena Davis
Gale Gayley
Andy Garcia
John Bubber
Joan Cesack
Evelyn
Kevin J. O'Connor
Chuck
Maury Chaykin
Winston
Stephen Tobolowsky
Wallace
Christian Clemenson
Conklin
Tom Arnold
Chick
Warren Berlinger
Judge Goines
Cody Huffman
Flight Attendant Leslie
Susie Cassack
Donna O'Day
James Madlo
Joey
Richard Meade
Robinson
Daniel Leroy Baldwin
Fireman Denton
Don Yesso
Elliott
Don Pugsley
Jury Foreman
Lee Wilkof
Prosecutor
Steven Elkins
Raymond Fitzpatrick
Bailiffs
Leslie Jordan
Court Official
Bobby C. Collins
Mendoza
Richard Montoya
Vargas
Ricardo Salinas
Mendoza's Friend
Herbert Siguenza
Espinosa
Don S. Davis
Probation Officer
Darrell Larson
Flight Attendant
Freddie
Harry Northup
Mr Fletcher
Jordan Bond
Richie Fletcher
Eric Poppick
Mr Smith
Julia Barry
Kelly
Marnie Mosiman
Susan
William Duff Griffin
Mr Brown
Peggy Roeder
Bag Lady on TV
Katrina Carlo
Make-up Artist
Kevin Jackson
Inspector Dayton

Don Gazzaniga
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Lance Kinsey
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Michael Talbott
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Parker
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Channel 4
Anchorwoman
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Reporters
Martin Schlemie
Allen in Coma
Jeff Garlin
News Vendor
John M. Watson Sr
African American
Wannabee
John Mohrlein
Tony Fitzpatrick
Fighter Wannabees
Vito D'Ambrosio
Wannabee
Jay Leggett
Mud Face Wannabee
Dev Kennedy
Tall Wannabee
Darryl Davis
Terry Muller
James Alfred Whitaker
Tough Prisoners
Collins Williams Daniels
Rasta Prisoner
I. M. Hobson
Waiter/Captain
William Newman
Millionaire
Clea Lewis
Sylvia
Jeff Kline
John Merrill
Street Kids
Lynn Oddo
Buxom Woman
Milton L. Cobb
Robert Pabst
Vietnam Vets
Tom Milanovich
Guard at Jail
Cordis Hoard
Nurse Roberts
Mandy Duncan
Gerardo Marillo-Carr
Teens in Hospital
Henry Brown
Hospital Guard
Robert Munns
Doctor
Yamar Teufenkjian
Jose Reyes
Michael Mullen
D'Angelo Ferreri
Kody Cullum
Children in Hospital
Heidi McNeal
Teenage Girl at
Hospital
Michael O'Dwyer
Cop at Hospital
Ed Scheibner
Donna's Boyfriend
James Callahan
Police Chief
D. David Morin
Fireman on Ledge
Dan Healy
George Bush
Look A-Like
Margery Jane Ross
Barbara Bush
Look A-Like

10,614 feet
118 minutes

accept a Silver Mike award. Her return flight hits turbulence and crashes into a river. Bernie, driving past to take Joey to the movies, reluctantly wades in to open the plane's jammed door. Even more unwillingly, he rescues three passengers trapped in the burning aircraft. One of them is Gale, whose purse he steals, though his main concern is his shoe lost in the mud.

Arriving late for a date with Joey, Bernie is thrown out by the furious Evelyn. His car breaks down; getting a lift from John Bubber, a down-and-out living in an old truck, he tells him what happened and gives him the remaining shoe. Gale meanwhile launches a huge media campaign to find her unknown rescuer, dubbed 'The Angel of Flight 104'. A \$1m reward is offered, with the stray shoe the only clue. John Bubber turns up with the shoe, claiming to be the mystery man. A Vietnam vet down on his luck, he is acclaimed a national hero. Bernie, arrested trying to unload Gale's credit cards, is slung in jail, vainly protesting he is the true Angel, and Donna bails him out.

Gale tracks down Bernie via her returned cards, taking him for a fence who is blackmailing John. Summoned to the hotel where John, overcome by remorse, is about to jump from a ledge, she drags Bernie with her. Crawling out on the ledge, Bernie strikes a deal: he gets a share of the cash, but John remains the official hero. He slips and falls; John rescues him. Back inside, Gale realises the truth but keeps it quiet. At the zoo, Bernie tells Joey what really happened; a child falls into the lion's cage, and Bernie wearily goes to the rescue.

Early on in *Accidental Hero*, ace reporter Gale Gayley, accepting her award at a gala assembly of her colleagues, shreds an onion to illustrate a point she's making. It's a jarringly implausible scene, not helped by Geena Davis' playing. Here, as elsewhere in the film, she seems awkward and unhappy with her role, and rather than peeling the onion layer by layer in slow striptease she wrenches it clumsily apart, as if to get the whole distasteful business over as soon as possible.

A gradual peeling, though, would be more apt for her metaphor, the idea of a news story that could yield not merely successive layers of ripe sensation, but one "that reveals with each layer of investigation something finer and nobler, inspiring even." It's clearly a pointer to what's coming, and in the film's final scene Bernie Laplante offers his disenchanted gloss on the same concept. "All there is," he tells his young son, "is bullshit - one layer of bullshit on top of another. All you do is choose the layer of bullshit that suits you."

Bets, it seems, are being hedged here. *Accidental Hero* picks up all the ingredients of an old-style Capraesque fable - lovable, harmless low-lives, tough reporters with hearts of mush, trusting wide-eyed kids, feelgood mot

Chicago. Small-time crook Bernie Laplante is found guilty of receiving stolen goods. While his lawyer, Donna O'Day, pleads for a few days bail before sentence is passed, Bernie lifts her purse. Later he goes to the zoo with his ten-year-old son Joey, who lives with Bernie's estranged wife Evelyn.

Gale Gayley, Chicago Channel 4's star reporter, flies to New York to



A taste of onion: Dustin Hoffman

toes like "we're all heroes if you catch us at the right moment" - but keeps holding them out at arm's length, as if signalling to us sophisticates in the audience that the film-makers aren't really taking all this stuff seriously. So if we opt to see something "noble, inspiring even", then fine. If not, we have our choice of bullshit. Andy Garcia, valiantly making the most of a hopelessly underwritten role, plays Bubber as a sure-fire hero whose one moment of weakness redeems his perfection. But the film - and George Fenton's score in particular - constantly undercuts him. Visiting a children's ward, he talks to a boy in a coma ("I know you're in the darkness in there - be strong for me") who subsequently makes a "miracle recovery". The cliché of the scene is underscored (or, rather, overscored) with glutinously swelling strings. And when Bubber saves the life of the only man who could expose him, at the risk of his own, we get the Battle Hymn of the Republic, no less.

Originally called *Hero*, and poorly received at the US box office, the film has been retitled for its British release to make sure no-one misses the irony. But it still smells like a doomed venture, and Garcia apart, few of those involved give much impression of commitment. Hoffman turns in a cut-price retread of his Ratso Rizzo act from *Midnight Cowboy*, all shuffle and mumble. Frears' direction feels sluggish, lacking the edgy, raw-nerve quality he brought to *The Grifters* and *Dangerous Liaisons*. And it's hard to see where the contribution of screenwriter David Webb Peoples ties in with his work on *Unforgiven*, barring maybe a weakness for heroes who fall in the mud and growl a lot.

Just how far Frears and Peoples, or their actors, believe in what they're doing hardly matters. After all, Capra - if Joseph McBride's recent biography is to be believed - never really bought the New Deal populism of his 30s movies. But he directed them as if he did, with no ironic winking at the audience. *Accidental Hero* tries to have it both ways, mocking its own corniness, ostentatiously unpeeling the onion to show us how slickly the layers fit together. And as Peer Gynt found out, the more you unpeel your onion the closer you get to the nothing at the heart of it.

hilip Kemp

Blue Black Permanent

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Margaret Tait

Certificate
PG

Distributor
BFI

Production Companies

BFI/Channel 4

A Viz Permanent

production

Executive Producers

Ben Gibson

Rod Stoneman

Kate Swan

Executive in Charge

of Production

Angela Topping

Producer

Barbara Grigor

Co-producer

Kate Swan

Associate Producer

Christine Maclean

Production Co-ordinator

Avril Watt

Location Managers

Sara Barr

Andrea Calderwood

Costing

Susie Bruffin

Assistant Directors

Gus Maclean

Alison Goring

Screenplay

Margaret Tait

Director of Photography

Alex Scott

In colour

Editor

John MacDonnell

Production Designer

Andrew Sample

Music

John Gray

Music Director

David McNiven

Pibroch/Vocals

Allan MacDonald

Songs

"Half As Much"

by Carly Williams,

performed by Hank

Williams; "Hilltop

Pibroch" by Hector

MacAndrew, Margaret

Tait; "Fishermen's

Hymn", traditional

Costume Design

Lynn Aitken

Make-up

Irene Napier

Titles

Paperdart

Sound Editor

Neil Castell

Sound Recordists

Aad Wirtz

Adrian Rhodes

Music

Brian Young

Dolby stereo

Music Consultant

Bob Last

Cast

Celia Imrie

Barbara Thorburn

Jack Shepherd

Philip Lomax

Gerda Stevenson

Greta Thorburn

James Fleet

Jim Thorburn

Sean Scanlan

Andrew Cunningham

Hilary Maclean

Wendy

Walter Leach

Sam Kelday

Shona Marr

Mrs Kemp

Eoin MacDonnell

Dan of Fea

Jimmy Moor

Billy Spence

Liz Robertson

Mary Kelday

Bobby Bews

Grandfather Bews

Kath Hutchison

Roger

Mairi Wallace

Shoe Salesgirl

Pamela Kelly

Mrs Brodie

Joan Alcorn

Mrs Kilgour

Lisa Grindall

Joan Kilgour

Gowan Calder

Eileen

Katie Great

Young Barbara

James Holmes

Fergus

Sean Holmes

Tom

Elsa Davidson

Young Greta

Thomas Pirie

Donald

Gill Jack

Newsreader

Douglas Sutherland

Art Critic

Ernest Tait

Peter Tait

Boatmen

7,096 feet

86 minutes

Andrew, a painter whose flat is as much studio as home. Greta tells Andrew she admires his dedication, but contrasts his single-minded devotion to his art with her need to share her writing with a home life, a combination he considers impossible. Meanwhile Wendy, who had been shocked to find Greta distracted, slips out to phone Greta's husband Jim who, arriving at Andrew's from the office, is bemused by Greta's behaviour.

Returning to the present, Barbara and Philip tentatively discuss having children, but Barbara breaks off into a further recollection. Greta makes a trip to the Orkneys to check on the health of her father. She prepares breakfast for him, and the two share a drink with friends who have dropped by to talk old times. Time shifts still further back with Barbara recalling how her grandmother died when she was swept from land by the sea. On a walk to the shore, Barbara tells Philip she would like to paint the sea: they meet a friend who jokingly asks if they are married yet, and Barbara replies that they are not the marrying sort. A dream sequence which ends with Barbara floating in mid-air is followed by a memory of herself, young, shopping for shoes, very sure of her tastes.

Back in the present and back in the flat, Barbara realises what she has been looking for: an identity as herself, rather than her mother's daughter. She recalls how her mother died, walking into the sea. Philip finally admits to jealousy, asking where he fits into these stories. Encouraged by Barbara's wish to involve him, he suggests seeking out Greta's published poetry in the library. Later, Barbara visits Andrew to photograph him for an exhibition of his work. She is drawn to the same objects that attracted her mother and Andrew is reminded of Greta. Philip and Barbara visit Andrew's exhibition and the three go for a drink. Back at home, Barbara recalls the discovery of Greta's body and the discovery by her father of an unfinished poem.

Blue Black Permanent works like a talking cure. Barbara is at a crossroads - one choice seems to be between greater or lesser commitment to lover Philip - and goes looking for clues in the past. In the present-day scenes very little 'happens': the lovers talk disjointedly, potter about the flat and go for walks. The flashbacks tell the film's most complete story, covering events leading up to the death of Barbara's mother. Yet the present is not used as a mere framing device, nor is the death exploited for its 'drama'. Rather, the beauty of Margaret Tait's construction is that it allows connections across the two periods to emerge as the film progresses, serving the real drama, which lies in Barbara's attempts to understand and to communicate.

These connections might be specific and fairly direct: Barbara and Philip seem to be at odds about having children, although neither's position is obvious, and yet one takes as germane Andrew's comments about having to

choose between pleasing yourself and having a family life. Or they may be diffuse. Water, for instance, is everywhere: for Barbara's first swim; as refreshing storm rain; and, in repeated shots, as steely, cold threat. It is promise or delight or a killer, each sight recalling and foreshadowing others.

More generally, words, faces, scenes suggest others, both to the characters within the film and to the viewer, so that everything and everyone seem to exist entirely to stimulate recollections of something or someone else. The network that Tait sets up might even be seen to reflect on the nature of creativity itself, establishing a lattice-work of points that is accessed by memory and imagination. Tait has made some 30 short films since the early 1950s and the structure of this, her first feature - in which thematic coherence counts for more than straight narrative - is of a sort more often found in shorts. In tone, it is very much of a piece: the colours are sombre and the music (scored for two cellos and clarinet by John Gray who, like Tait, is a native of the Orkney Islands) meditative.

Tait's direction is invariably apt. In the conversations between Barbara and Philip, the camera acts detached as if chancing upon fragments of conversation. In the flashbacks, objects are fixed or lingered over as if viewed by one of the film's 'artists' - Andrew, Greta and Barbara. When Greta prepares breakfast for her father and, in turn, the old stove, the bread and the eggs are pored over. Tait could be inviting us to feel their texture with much the same minute interrogation of detail as Terence Davies applied to the carpet in *The Long Day Closes*.

Almost between the lines, the small story of the present unfolds. The memories and their telling serve a purpose as Barbara realises she is not compelled to follow past family patterns; while Philip gains from sharing in her story and, by extension, in her. One could imagine a similar premise treated as a verbal roundelay, as a stagey TV drama where issues are talked into the ground. Tait's achievement is to suggest the processes that lie behind our ways of seeing, our declarations, and to find a style that enacts, or at least simulates, those very processes.

Robert Yates



Blue rinse: Gerda Stevenson

Crush

New Zealand 1992

Director: Alison Maclean

Certificate
15
Distributor
Metro Pictures
Production Company
Hibiscus Films
In association with
New Zealand Film
Commission/NFU
Studios/NZ On Air
Developed by The
Movie Partners Ltd
With assistance from
The Sundance Institute
Producer
Bridget Ikin
Associate Producer
Trevor Haysom
Production Executive
Sue Thompson
Production Co-ordinator
Moira Grant
Production Manager
Chloe Smith
Location Manager
Sally Sherratt
Post-production
Co-ordinator
Cushla Dillon
Costing
Diana Rowan
Assistant Directors
George Lyle
Victoria Hardy
Velma Wright
Screenplay
Alison Maclean
Anne Kennedy
Director of Photography
Dion Beebe
In colour
2nd Unit Director of
Photography
Allen Guilford
Camera Operator
Ian Turilli
Opticals
Lynda Sinclair
Editor
John Gilbert
Production Designer
Meryl Cronin
Art Directors
Brett Schwieters
David Turner
Music
JPS Experience
Additional:
Antony Partos
Music Performed by
Russell Bailie
James Laing
Dave Mulcahy
Gary Sullivan
David Yetton
Greg Johnson
The Australian Opera
and Ballet Orchestra
Pianist:
Guy Noble
Orchestrations
Derek Williams
Music Editor
Andrew Lancaster
Music Consultant
John Hopkins
Songs
"Dangerous Game"
by Ruler Rautjolo,
performed by Jules
Issa: "Hold Me Tight"
by and performed by
Pete Smith; "Do It Like
This" by Dean Hapeta,
George Hubbard,
performed by Upper
Hutt Posse; "I Need
Your Love" by Calvin
Kaukau, performed
by Golden Harvest;
"Night" by Tom
Ludwigson, performed
by Inner City Jazz
Workshop
Costume Design
Ngila Dickson
Make-up
Abby Collins
Dominic Tili
Prosthetics
Bob McCarron
Title Design
Graham Cooper
Supervising Sound Editor
Greg Bell
Sound Editors
Kir Rollings
Mike Hopkins
Ross Chambers
Sound Recordists
Robert Allen
Foley:
Helen Luttrell
Michael Hedges
Music:
Victor Grbic
Angus McNaughton
Anthony Nerison
Michael Stavrov
Dolby stereo
Consultant:
Stephen Murphy
Sound Re-recordists
John McKay
Music:
John Neill
Consultants
Physiotherapist:
Denise Lyness
Nurse:
Shirley Wilson
Stunt Co-ordinator
Peter Bell
Stunts
Bruce Brown
Cast
Marcia Gay Harden
Lane
William Zappa
Colin
Donagh Ross
Christina
Caitlin Bossley
Angela
Pete Smith
Horse
Jon Brazier
Arthur
Geoffrey Southern
Wayne Roberts
Patients
Shirley Wilson
Denise Lyness
Yrish Howie
Wayne McCarron
Jennifer Karahana
Nurses
David Stott
Stephen
Harata Solomon
Auntie Bet
Coroline De Lora
Colleen
Paul McLachlan
Ward Sister
Alistair McConnell
Doctor
Terry Butcher
Taxi Driver
Martin Booker
Waiter
8,627 feet
96 minutes

New Zealand. Journalist Christina and her anarchic American friend Lane drive to Rotorua to interview prize-winning novelist Colin. Lane takes the wheel and crashes the car. She escapes uninjured,



Steaming in Hell's Kitchen: Marcia Gay Harden, Caitlin Bossley

but Christina is hospitalised with severe brain damage. The stunned Lane retreats to a nearby motel. She decides to keep Christina's appointment with Colin. Outside his house, she meets his fifteen-year-old daughter Angela and makes no secret of her attraction to her. Taking Angela back to the motel, she lends her a provocative dress to wear to the local night-club that evening. Despite her father's disapproval, Angela wears the dress and accompanies Lane.

At the club, Angela is attracted to Maori singer Horse, but it is Lane who seduces him, inviting him and Angela back to the motel. After an intruder attempts unsuccessfully to get into the room, Lane and Angela return to Angela's house to sleep. Next morning, Lane introduces herself to Colin and invites him to the motel on the pretext of giving him a haircut. Colin accepts the invitation and they make love. Later, Lane moves in with Colin and Angela. After Lane openly spends the night with Colin, Angela goes to the hospital to visit Christina. Benefiting from Angela's regular visits, Christina gradually comes out of her coma. Jealous of Lane's affair with her father, Angela primes Christina with hatred of Lane as the person responsible for Christina's injuries.

When Colin, Lane and Angela go to stay at a lakeside cottage, Angela arranges for Christina to join them. Both Colin and Lane are shocked by the appearance of the wheelchair-bound Christina. During a walk in the hills, Angela and Colin leave Lane and Christina alone together. To Lane's surprise, Christina is suddenly able to walk. They arrive at a hill-top look-out, where Christina suddenly pushes Lane over the parapet. Angela, fearing the worst, hurries back to find them, but arrives just too late to witness Christina's act of revenge.

Crush begins well. Director Alison Maclean, whose first feature this is, expertly draws the viewer into the action via the intimate conversations between the two friends Christina and Lane during their drive along the New Zealand backroads in the opening scene. The careful placing of characters within an ambience and lack of melodramatic rhetoric recall Peter Weir's relaxed introduction to *The Cars*

That Ate Paris. The script and Marcia Gay Harden's blithely anarchic performance establish Lane's iconoclasm and the ruthlessness with which this American friend flouts conventional morality. It is also hinted, through Angela's sexual ambiguity, that all may not be as it seems.

Maclean has expressed her admiration for the way Buñuel uses sexuality to cut through bourgeois pretension. In Pasolini's *Teorema* a mysterious stranger similarly releases a family's repressed sexuality to disturbing effect. But Maclean, however vivid her portrait of the amoral intruder, never really gives enough substance to the small-town values Lane throws into disarray. Colin's status as a reputed novelist is left somewhat obscure, while only the odd glimpse of suburban life is offered: late-night antics at the club, a few extras at a restaurant, the stunted architecture, and the clipped language of the protagonists. The signs of an incipient tourist industry are given distinctly malevolent implications, from the mannequin dressed in Maori costume to the threatening hiss of the bubbling natural geysers of Hell's Kitchen which suggest a veneer of civilisation in imminent danger of cracking apart. Natural forces have been used as potent symbols in films like Henry Hathaway's *Niagara* or Rossellini's *Stromboli*, where they are matched by characters who possess equal dynamism. Here, it is only Lane's evil intent that manages to convince. Angela's desire for vengeance is both too masked by Caitlin Bossley's placid performance and too heavily sign-posted by the script to be effective.

It might have been better to speed the narrative to its inevitable conclusion as soon as Angela's true purpose in visiting Christina becomes clear. Colin is portrayed as a sexual stooge from the beginning (at one point he clownishly approaches Lane with one leg in and one out of his trousers) - which may sharpen the film's sexual sting, but is hardly enough motivation for the character to hunch angst-ridden in front of his word processor. Nevertheless, *Crush* contains an impressive performance from Harden and provides sufficient evidence of an authentically skewed eye-view to arouse interest in Maclean's future work.

Verina Glessner

The Distinguished Gentleman

USA 1992

Director: Jonathan Lynn

Certificate
15
Distributor
Buena Vista
Production Company
Hollywood Pictures
Company
Executive Producer
Marty Kaplan
Producers
Leonard Goldberg
Michael Peyser
Production Associate
Stephen Mapel
Richard Mirisch
Production Co-ordinators
Lark Bernini
Alison Sherman
Unit Production Manager
Richard H. Prince
Location Managers
Murray Miller
Veronique Vowell
Location Co-ordinator
D. Michael Wallace
Costing
Mary Goldberg
Assistant Directors
Frank Capra III
Matthew H. Rowland
Algie Leo Chaplin
Screenplay
Marty Kaplan
Story
Marty Kaplan
Jonathan Reynolds
Director of Photography
Gabriel Beristain
Colour
Technicolor
Camera Operators
Richard Turner
Jeff Laszlo
Steadicam Operator
Jeff Mart
Matte
Artist:
Paul Lasaine
Painting: Buena Vista
Visual Effects
Editors
Tony Lombardo
Barry B. Leiner
Production Designer
Leslie Dilley
Art Director
Ed Verreux
Set Design
Geoff Hubbard
Lawrence Hubbs
Elizabeth Lapp
Set Decorator
Dorree Cooper
Set Dressers
John H. Maxwell
Jeffrey Wilhoit
Deborah Harman
Tim Wiles
Scott E. Bruza
Richard R. Powell
Illustrator
Marc Baird
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Jan H. Aaris
Music/Music Director
Randy Edelman
Orchestrations
Greig McRitchie
Music Editor
Tom Carlson
Songs
"The Thunderer"
by John Philip Sousa;
"Happy Days Are Here
Again" by Milton Ager;
Jack Yellen; "Soul
Trilogy III" by Chuckii
Booker, Derek "DOA"
Allen, performed
by Chuckii Booker;
"The Politics of Love"
by Phil Marshall
Costume Design
Francine Jamison-
Tanchuck
Costume Supervisor
Betty Jean Slater
Costumers
Fetteroff Colen III
David Page
Michael Fitzpatrick
Aida Swinson
Michael Castellano
Michael Lee Jamison
Make-up
Rick Sharp
Steve Artmont
Anthony S. Lloyd
Title Design
Dan Perri
Titles/Opticals
Buena Vista Optical
Supervising Sound Editor
Fred Jenkins
Sound Editors
Gaston Biraben
David Lee Hagberg
Philip Hess
William Hooper
Christopher Todd
Scott Weber
Ed Bannan
Richard Corwin
Rich Steven
Supervising ADR Editor
Renée Tondelli
Foley Supervisor
Bruce Nyznik
ADR Editors
James A. Borgardt
Jerilyn J. Harding
Jonathan A. Klein
Sound Recordists
Russell Williams II
Music:
Dennis Sands
ADR Recordist
Doc Kane
Foley Recordist
David Gertz
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
John Rietz
Dave Campbell
Gregg Rudloff
ADR Group Co-ordinator
Leigh French
ADR Voices
Royce Applegate
Thomas Brunelle
June Christopher
Kit Paraventi
Ruth Silveira
Arnold Turner
Foley Artists:
James M. Moriana
Jeffrey Wilhoit
Stunt Co-ordinator
Alan Olney
Cast
Eddie Murphy
Thomas Jefferson
Johnson
Lane Smith
Dick Dodge
Sheryl Lee Ralph
Miss Loretta
Joe Don Baker
Olaf Andersen
Victoria Rowell
Celia Kirby
Grant Shaud
Arthur Reinhardt
Kevin McCarthy
Terry Corrigan
Charles S. Dutton
Elijah Hawkins
Victor Rivera
Armando
Chi
Homer
Sonny Jim Gaines
Van Dyke

Noble Willingham
Zele Bridges
Gary Frank
Iowa
Daniel Benzali
"Skeeter" Warburton
Christina Harris
Vera Johnson
Susan Forristal
Ellen Juba
Autumn Winters
Mickey Juba
James Garner
Jeff Johnson
Doris Grau
Hattie Rifkin
Frances Foster
Grandma
Sarah Carson
Kimberly
Mel Owens
Be Chandler
Bred Koopman
Rafe Simon
John Donohue
Ira Scheeter
Rosanna Hoffman
Mrs Bridges
Dianne Turley Travis
Mrs Dodge
Tom Dahlgren
Chief of Police
Tom Finnegan
Ethics Committee
Chair
Marty Kaplan
Ned Grable
CHW Gomis
Gun Lobbyist

Prudence Barry
Teacher
Nina Tolenberg
Election Anchor
Julianne McCarthy
Blue-haired Woman
Daniel Patrick Jar
Asbestos Lobbyist
Dion Anderson
Distilled Spirits
Lobbyist
Sib Lavin
Tobacco Lobbyist
Richard Anders
Poultry Lobbyist
Brian Goletto
Crabhouse Waiter
Roger Reid
Florida Reporter
Angela Strahling
DC Anchor
Patricia Clarks
DC Correspondent
David A. Pouchak
Voting Husband
Cordis Hoard
Voting Wife
Gary Price
Taxi Driver
Tommy Boggs
Tommy Boggs
J.D. Williams
J.D. Williams

10,103 feet
112 minutes

At a fund-raiser for corrupt Florida congressman Jeff Johnson, small-time hustler Thomas Jefferson Johnson cons the host out of twelve thousand dollars and a Rolex watch. As he makes his escape he hears the congressman and his corporate paymaster discussing bounteous kickbacks, and concludes that he's in the wrong business.

When the congressman dies, Thomas decides to stand in his place, with a campaign - "Jeff Johnson - the name you know" - whose sole asset is name recognition. By carefully keeping his face and personality out of the debate, Johnson engineers a narrow victory. Arriving in Washington with his old partners in confidence crime as his staff, he soon gets himself a place on the influential Power and Energy Commission. He's just starting to reap the benefits of his new position when he meets Celia Kirby, an attractive and principled *pro bono* campaigner, whose uncle is campaigning congressman Elijah Hawkins, then engaged in a bitter struggle over ethics with Johnson's crooked patron Dick Dodge.

Against his worse nature, Johnson gets involved with a mother and child who are campaigning for an investigation into cancer clusters at schools near electricity sub-stations. Dodge and his cronies buy him off, and he also inadvertently helps them to discredit Celia's uncle, much to her disgust. To win back her favour and reassert his pride, Johnson decides to con Dodge. At a commission meeting, with the mass media much in evidence, he tries to railroad him into announcing an inquiry into the carcinogenic effects of power lines by threatening to make public a videotape which he implies contains evidence of corruption. Confronted by Johnson, Dodge realises he is bluffing, and then tells the assembled throng about Johnson's criminal background.

But the latter has taped their private argument, which he plays back in open session, discrediting Dodge and laying bare the corruption that surrounds him. He tells Celia that now everyone knows his face he is finished as a conman, so he'll have to stand for President.

Eddie Murphy's rehabilitation as a family entertainer continues apace with this good-humoured Capitol Hill romp. Murphy has not been reborn as a political radical; the emphasis here is on sprightly, character-driven comedy with windows for trademark smirk and chuckle. The storyline of the conman who goes up in the world and becomes a better person is strongly reminiscent of *Trading Places*, and though this film is not as perfectly realised as that one, which was probably Murphy's finest moment, it does contain his funniest, most relaxed performance for some years.

This is not a subtle film. The congressman (a quick but welcome exercise cameo from James Garner) cannot just die, he has to die in *flagrante* with his personal assistant. You can hear the star vehicle wheels creaking every now and again too: as agents of moral awakening go, the child cancer-victim whose wig falls off in a struggle is not exactly working undercover. But the film's critique of political corruption and hypocrisy is quite sharp in places, and *The Distinguished Gentleman* is a lot less self-congratulatory and also rather better thought out than the disappointing *Bob Roberts*. It is also considerably more democratic - preferring to make comic capital out of the abuses of those in power, rather than the cupidity of those who vote for them.

The political process is hardly new ground for British director Jonathan Lynn, who comes to *The Distinguished Gentleman* fresh from considerable surprise success with *My Cousin Vinny*. Lynn made his name writing and directing *Yes Minister* for the BBC, but he clearly relishes the broader strokes of satire required by the American cinema audience. Like *My Cousin Vinny*, this film is slightly too long and somewhat uneven in pace - the effect of some very funny moments being undermined by too many jokeless interludes - but whenever Murphy is on screen it's never far from being funny. And Lynn has helped make his star likeable again, which a year ago seemed almost impossible.

It's interesting too to watch the tension between Murphy's star presence and the idea of political influence. His character is not a fish out of water but a bottom-feeder nibbling around for what he can get until he bites off a moral imperative. It comes as no surprise that it's an environmental rather than a racial issue that leads him to reveal his true colours. There is a subtext here of considerable political subtlety on the part of Murphy himself - who seems to be admitting he got above himself for a while back there, and now just wants to make amends.

Ben Thompson

Forever Young

USA 1992

Director: Steve Miner

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Warner Bros
Production Company
Warner Bros
Executive Producers
Edward S. Feldman
Jeffrey Abrams
Producer
Bruce Davey
Unit Production Manager
Stephen M. McEweety
Location Managers
Ron Carr
Gail Stempier
2nd Unit Director
David Ellis
Casting
Marion Dougherty
Assistant Directors
Matt Earl Beesley
David Schragar
John Kuberski
Tom Peltzman
Andy Spilkoman
Chris Gerrity
John Scotti
Screenplay
Jeffrey Abrams
Director of Photography
Russell Boyd
Colour
Technicolor
Additional Photography/
2nd Unit Photography
Michael Benson
Aerial Photography
Rexford Metz
Camera Operators
Michael St. Hilaire
Chris Schweibert
Phil Schwartz
Optical/Digital Effects
Peter Kuran
Editor
Jon Poll
Production Designer
Gregg Fonseca
Art Director
Bruce A. Miller
Set Design
Jann K. Engel
Richard Yanez
Steve Jeffrey Wolff
Set Decorator
Jay R. Hart
Mechanical Effects
Image Special Effects
Company
Peter Chesney
Music/Music Director
Jerry Goldsmith
Orchestrations
Arthur Morton
Alexander Courage
Music Editor
Ken Hall
Songs
"The Very Thought of You" by Ray Noble, performed by Billie Holiday; "You Are My Sunshine" by Jimmie Davis; Charles Mitchell
Costume Design
Aggie Guerard Rodgers
Costume Supervisors
Frank Rose
Deanna Doran
Make-up
Dick Smith
Michael Hancock
Lona Jeffers
Special Make-up Effects
Greg Cannom
Title Design
Nina Saxon
Film Design
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title
Supervising Sound Editor
Dane A. Davis
Sound Editors
Martin J. Bram
Kimberly Lowe Voigt
ADR Supervisor
G.W. Brown
ADR Editor
Avram Gold
Foley Editors
Tom Hammond
Kurt N. Forshager
Sound Recordists
Jim Tanenbaum
Music:
Bruce Botnick
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Les Fresholtz
Vern Poore
Dick Alexander
Sound Effects Editors
Todd Toon
Kini Kay
Peter Tomaszewicz
Technical Advisors
Major Christopher G. Chalko
Charles E. Davis
Major Violeta A. Strong
Medical:
Donna Cline
Matt Clancy
Stunt Co-ordinator
David Ellis
Aerial Co-ordinator
James W. Cavin
Stunts
Gregory Barnett
Steve Boyum
Steve Chambers
John Thomas Cypert
Annie Ellis
Richard Ellis
Tony Epper
Don Pulford
Mic Rogers
Ric Waugh
Dick Ziker
B25 Pilot
Steve Hinton
Cost
Mel Gibson
Daniel McCormick
Janice Lee Curtis
Claire
Elijah Wood
Nat
Isabel Glasser
Helen
George Wendt
Harry
Joe Morton
Cameron
Nicola Savoy
John
David Marshall Grant
Wilcox
Robert Hy Gorman
Felix
Mille Slavin
Susan Blinley
Michael Georgian
Steven
Veronica Lauren
Alicia
Art/Life
Alicia's Father
Eric Pierpoint
Fred
Walt Goggins
Gate MP
Amenda Forman
Debbie
Katie Tombarrelli
Blanche
Robert Munna
Wrong Harry
J.D. Coffin
Frank
Ara Lazar
Waitress at Diner
(1992)
Richard Ryder
Michael Briggs
Pilots at Airshow
Nancy Ransom
Jared Chandler
Officers at Warehouse
Jon Menick
Doctor at Airfield

Paul Giam
Jason Iorg
Airbase Personnel
(1939)
Mary Ellen Moore
Ticket Woman
Miriam Beasley
Lisa Savage
Women at Picnic
Cody Burger
Boy at Picnic
Dean Halle
Greg Allen Martin
Joel McKinnon Miller
Men at Picnic

William Marquez
Hospital Doctor
Shave Hinton Jar
Boy with Ice Cream
John Bourg
Daniel, age 11
Ara Maxwell
Helen, age 11

9,127 feet
101 minutes

1939. Daniel McCormick is a courageous young test pilot for the newly-formed Air Corps. His best friend Harry Finley is experimenting secretly in cryogenics. The two friends celebrate when Harry's first experiments are successful. Later, Daniel and his girlfriend Helen join Harry and his wife Blanche at their barbecue where Harry announces that Blanche is pregnant. The next day, Daniel practices asking Helen to marry him but finally lacks the courage to propose. Helen is involved in a road accident which leaves her in what is apparently an irreversible coma. Six months later, a still-grieving Daniel is told by Harry that he is ready to experiment on a human being, but doesn't have a subject. Daniel volunteers to be deep-frozen for a year.

1992. Ten year-old Nat lives with his mother Claire, a nurse. Nat and his best friend Felix explore an old army warehouse where they discover Harry's freezing machine, and inadvertently return the frozen Daniel to life. The terrified boys run away, leaving Nat's jacket behind, but no-one believes their story. Daniel discovers that he has been asleep for 50 years, and tells his story to a young army officer who summons guards. Daniel escapes, finds Nat and returns the jacket. Nat and Felix hide him in Nat's tree house.

That evening, Daniel rescues Claire from attack by a drunken ex-boyfriend. Claire takes him in, but he leaves to search for Harry. When his leads come to nothing, Daniel returns to Claire's house as a guest and makes himself useful as cook, handyman and friend to Nat. Meanwhile, the army stumbles on the truth of Daniel's story and a team of medical and FBI personnel is assembled to find him. Daniel is suffering from the after-effects of freezing and eventually ends up in hospital with heart failure where Claire's doctor boyfriend, John, recognises him. ▶



Medium cool: Mel Gibson

◀ The medical tests show that Daniel is ageing rapidly. The FBI is now on his trail; John helps Daniel escape with Claire and Nat from the hospital, and Claire takes him to see a woman who has responded to Daniel's search for Harry. She turns out to be Harry's daughter Susan, and tells Daniel that Helen is still alive. Claire helps Daniel to steal an aeroplane and he takes off, unaware that Nat is in the hold. During the flight Daniel is gripped with pain and Nat has to help him land the aircraft. At Helen's house on the coast, Daniel and Helen are reunited and embrace amid declarations of love and promises of marriage.

Steve Miner may not be the best director in Hollywood but he is certainly not the worst, as one reviewer dubbed him at the preview of *Forever Young*: *House* lacked a punchline and *Soul Man* was a curate's egg, but *Warlock* had real possibility. *Forever Young*, though, is a risible failure. Never sure what kind of film it is meant to be, it starts off as comic-strip action, careers into buddy-buddy and turns into tearjerker before the plot gets going. By the time the action jumps to 1992, it's become a kids' movie, and en route to the finish it's alternately an action adventure, slapstick comedy and romantic drama. The discovery of an alien, even a frozen one, is a common enough theme, but did Miner really have to include the series of *E.T.*-lookalike shots as the FBI/medical team get on Daniel's trail, the camera resolutely focused at knee-level?

With all flashback (or in this case, flash-forward) movies, there is always a problem with the continuity of casting, and *Forever Young* is no exception. George Wendt (from *Cheers* and *House*), playing Harry, sadly disappears when his death has to propel the plot into the 90s. Isabel Glasser as Helen, the romantic lead, has little more than a walk-on part, and only reappears for just a minute or two at the end, hideously aged to look like a cross between She-Who-Waits and a Romero zombie, for what must be one of the most repellent on-screen embraces ever filmed. But it's a major betrayal of talent when two stars like Mel Gibson and Jamie Lee Curtis get caught up in this sort of nonsense. Both Gibson and Curtis have a genuine talent for comedy but the script barely exploits the comic possibilities of Daniel's awakening 50 years on (let no-one dare even mention *Sleeper*). Gibson and Curtis, especially the latter, are both ultra-sexy; but Curtis is horribly miscast as the no-style mumsy divorcee and Gibson fares no better as the ageing process gets underway, leaving the audience hoping for back views of an improbably cute 80-year-old arse.

In the end a dollop of goopy sentiment is OK as long as it's well scripted and directed. *Forever Young* doesn't even manage that, proving that it takes more than a little skill to manipulate an audience to tears.

Jill McGreal

Guling Jie Shaonian Sha Ren Shijian (A Brighter Summer Day)

Taiwan 1991

Director: Edward Yang

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

ICA

Production Company

Yang and His Gang

Filmmakers

Executive Producer

Zhang Hongzhi

Producer

Yu Weiyan

Production Manager

Wu Zhuang

Assistant Directors

Cai Guohui

Yang Shunqing

Screenplay

Edward Yang

Yan Hongya

Yang Shunqing

Lai Mingtang

Directors of Photography

Zhang Huigong

Li Longyu

Editor

Chen Bowen

Production Designer

Yu Weiyan

Edward Yang

Set Decorator

Yang Shunqing

Music Supervisor

Zhan Hongda

Songs

"Why" by Bob

Marcucci, Peter

Deangle, "Angel Baby"

by Rosie and the

Originals, Rose Havtim,

"Never Be Anyone Else

But You" by B. Knight,

"Poor Little Fool" by

Sharon Sheeley, "Don't

Be Cruel" by Otis

Blackwell, Elvis Presley,

performed by Ku-Ling-

Jie, Shao-Nyan Band;

"Are You Lonesome

Tonight" by Roy Turk,

Lou Handman

performed by (1) Ku-

Ling-Jie, Shao-Nyan

Band, (2) Elvis Presley;

"Mr Blue" by Dewayne

Blackwell, Otis

Blackwell, performed

by Fleetwoods

Wardrobe

Chen Rofei

Wu Leqing

Zhu Meiyu

Make-up

Wu Shuhui

Sound Recorder

Du Duzhi

Cast

Zhang Zhao

Xiao Si'r (Zhang Zhen)

Lisa Yang

Ming (Liu Zhiming)

Zhang Guozhu

Zhang Ju (Father)

Elaine Jin

Mrs Zhang (Mother)

Wang Juan

Juan (Eldest Sister)

Zhang Han

Lao Er (Elder Brother)

Hong Xueqiong

Qiong (Middle Sister)

Lai Fanjun

Yun (Youngest Sister)

Wang Qian

Cat (Wang Mao)

Mo Yuhui

Airplane (Ji Fei)

Tan Zhigang

Ma

Zhang Mingxin

Underpants (Mingxin)

Rong Juniong

Sex Bomb

(Zhang Bowen)

Zhou Huiguo

Tiger (Xiao Hu)

Liu Qingqi

Hefty (Da Ge)

Production Manager

Wu Zhuang

Assistant Directors

Cai Guohui

Yang Shunqing

Screenplay

Edward Yang

Yan Hongya

Yang Shunqing

Lai Mingtang

Directors of Photography

Zhang Huigong

Li Longyu

Editor

Chen Bowen

Production Designer

Yu Weiyan

Edward Yang

Set Decorator

Yang Shunqing

Music Supervisor

Zhan Hongda

Songs

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Originals, Rose Havtim,

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"Poor Little Fool" by

Sharon Sheeley, "Don't

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performed by Ku-Ling-

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Elaine Jin

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Wang Juan

Juan (Eldest Sister)

Zhang Han

Lao Er (Elder Brother)

Hong Xueqiong

Qiong (Middle Sister)

Lai Fanjun

Yun (Youngest Sister)

Wang Qian

Cat (Wang Mao)

Mo Yuhui

Airplane (Ji Fei)

Wang's Wife

Zhuo Ming

Uncle Fat (Grocer)

Zhang Wenyan

Uncle Fat's Wife

Xiao Lianlian

Uncle Fat's Daughter

Zhang Yingzhong

Ming's Mother

Jin Shijie

Ming's 7th Uncle

Lin Lijiang

7th Uncle's Wife

Tang Ruyun

Mrs Xia

Lu Qiyun

Mrs Fang

Duan Zhongqi

Mr Chen

Cao Jialing

Mrs Chen

Xiao Zhivon

Ma's Mother

Chen Liangyue

Chauffeur

Chen Linna

Reverend Chen

Zhang Kazhong

Juan's Boyfriend

Lu Daming

Airplane's Father

Xiao Ai

Ice-cream Parlour Lady

Chen Xiahon

Blind, Fighter pilot

Huang Shidean

Girl Vendor

Shen Hongshen

Dean of Conduct

Meng Qiliang

Assistant Dean

of Conduct

Yan Hongya

Chinese Studies

Teacher

Ma Tingli

Mathematics Teacher

Wu Xiangping

Military Advisor

San Baogui

Jiang Weihua

Librarians

Shi Mingyang

Doctor

Chen Limel

Clinic Nurse

Chen Xiangqi

Doctor's Fiancée

Lai Denan

Doctor's Father

Lin Ruiping

Hospital Nurse

Danny Dunn

The Film Director

Shi Mingyu

The Temperamental

Star

Lin Hongzhong

The Male Lead

Shi Yihua

The Assistant Director

Shu Guozhi

The Cameraman

Gao Changru

The Key Grip

Gao Miaohe

The Producer

Liu Changhao

Juvenile Division

Officer

Xie Honglin

Duan Zhongzhang

Juvenile Division Cops

Hou Dajian

The Detective

Lang Zunyan

Policewoman

Tang Xianggu

Chen Laifu

Policemen

Li Minnan

Workman

Yu Weiyan

Wang Daonan

Interrogators

Wu Zhuang

Wu Leqing

Officers

Li Zhiqiang

Prisoner

Yang Liping

Zhou Huling

Lovers in Park

21,330 feet

237 minutes



Why do fools fall in love: Lisa Yang, Zhang Zhen

reminiscent of Hou, favours long takes and deep focus: a cinema of establishing shots, patient and reserved. It is an aesthetic that connects individuals with groups (class, gang or family) and fixes characters within their environment: the rigidly defined gang zones; the school; the roomy mansion where Ma lives and the close confines of Xiao Si'r's home (an unfortunate by-product of this style, at least for a Western viewer, is that the relative scarcity of close-ups can make it difficult to identify individuals – and this is a film with more than 80 speaking parts).

Taipei is shaped by the night: claustrophobic, regimented and oppressive. This is literally a dark period in history. The populace still bears the scars of the 1949 mass immigration; this is a people caught between cultures and ideologies (Chinese/Japanese/Taiwanese/Occidental) for whom the past is officially off-limits and the present full of doubt and disillusionment. As an early explanatory title notes, the children carried the burden of their parents' disappointment: many "defined their sense of identity and security by forming neighbourhood gangs".

Identity and security: Yang's is not a subjective film in a conventional sense (it encompasses many more perspectives than can be outlined here), but Xiao Si'r obviously serves as a focal point; the movie follows this unformed adolescent from anonymity to notoriety.

Two touchingly delicate scenes – both following meetings with the school principal – serve to show to what extent Si'r is his father's son. If he isn't sucked into gang culture, it is because he clings to his father's idealism. Zhang Ju is rather like one of the emasculated fathers in a James Dean delinquency melodrama: passive-progressive. His hopes for the future are inextricably tied to his faith in education (the film is framed by an opening scene in which he discusses his son's academic future, and a final, unsubtitled, radio transmission which broadcasts the names of those students who passed their school entrance exams). When his father's idealism proves unjustified or inadequate – when, for example, the school authorities reprimand Xiao Si'r for Sly's misdemeanour, or when Zhang Ju is arrested by the secret police – then the boy's quiet

resentment is pushed towards a dangerous pathology, so that in a confusion of pride and principle, violence becomes an act of self-assertion and even self-defence.

Ming explicitly identifies Xiao Si'r with her beloved Honey (neither "can stand injustice," she says). The gang leader becomes a second father figure whom Si'r must emulate and supplant. Like Zhang Ju, Honey is an idealist, but he is also a more obvious hero, an activist, a leader and a rebel. "Only two types of people scare me," he tells his rival Shandong, "the type who aren't afraid to die and the type who know no shame." After his murder, Xiao Si'r offers himself as Ming's protector in Honey's place. Yang doesn't show us any physical intimacy between them, and it becomes clear that Xiao Si'r trusts in an unthreatening, innocent femininity (hence his belated rapport with his virginal sister, a devout Christian). When he can no longer ignore Ming's promiscuity – as her relationships with Tiger, Ma and Sly come to light – Xiao Si'r recoils from her physically until, crucially, she confronts him with his own fearsome vanity ("You can't ask others to do what you think is right... I'm like this world – it will never change").

Yang has imbued melodrama with the resonance of tragedy. The film is both a critique of a certain kind of male romanticism (women here are – slightly ambivalently – pragmatic realists) and an elegy for it. More importantly, Yang discreetly identifies this psychosexual turmoil with social upheaval, and a corrupt, repressive regime. If there is a glimmer of hope in this outwardly dark and pessimistic movie, it is to be found in the conviction with which Yang illuminates the past, and in the humanity which he finds there. An independent production that was three years in the making, this nuanced and richly complex work is all the more impressive in the light of the parlous state of the Taiwanese film industry, from which many technicians have fled in recent years (the director estimates that 60% of his crew and 75% of his cast had never made a film before). It is a great pity that such a film should be restricted to a mere seven-day release in London.

Tom Charity

Hoffa

USA 1992

Director: Danny DeVito

Certificate

15

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

20th Century Fox

In association with

Jersey Films

Executive Producer

Joseph Isgro

Producers

Edward R. Pressman

Danny DeVito

Caldecott Chubb

Co-producer

Harold Schneider

Associate Producers

David Mamet

Wm. Barclay Malcolm

Production Co-ordinators

Sandra Maltz

Karen R. Sachs

Unit Production Managers

Harold Schneider

Grace Gilroy

Location Managers

Michael Williams

Robert H. Lerner

Richard Klotz

Costing

David Rubin

Debra Zane

Assistant Directors

Ned Dowd

Scott Senechal

Fernando A. Castro

Screenplay

David Mamet

Director of Photography

Stephen H. Burum

In colour

Camera Operators

Dustin Blauvelt

Additional:

Bruce MacCallum

William J. Gahrer

George Kohut

Kristin R. Glover

Steadicam Operator

Larry McConkey

Editors

Lynzee Klingman

Ronald Roose

Production Designer

Ida Random

Art Director

Gary Wissner

Set Designers

Charles Dahoub Jr

Robert Fechtman

Set Decorators

Brian Savagar

Gary Fettes

Set Dressers

Edwin Lohrer III

James Motyl

Gus Feederle

Michael Grady

Greg Lynch

Gary Brewer

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

John Frazier

Special Effects

Rocky Gehr

Paul Ryan

Francis Pennington

Harold G. Selig

Steve Lupori

Jan H. Aarls

David Amborn

Arnie Peterson

Music

David Newman

Music Editor

Tom Villano

Songs

"Let's Make Love

Tonight" by and

performed by Nicky

Addeo: "Hey Look Me

Over" by Cy Coleman,

Carolyn Leigh:

"When You're Smiling"

by Mark Fisher, Joe

Goodwin, Larry Shay

Costume Design

Deborah L. Scott

Wardrobe

Supervisors:

Darryl M. Athons

Kendall Errair

Mari Grimaud

James Tyson

Mark A. Peterson

Myron Baker

Lori Stilson

Greg Hall

Dawn Line

Tom Numbers

Elaine Ramires

Leslie Weir

Pie Lombardi

Make-up Artists

Supervisor: Ve Neill

John Blake

Donald Abbinanti

Special Make-up Effects

Greg Cannom

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

Richard L. Anderson

Stephen H. Flick

Sound Editors

Marvin Walowitz

Mike Chock

John Dunn

James Christopher

Dean Beville

Judee Flick

Rick Mitchell

David Bartlett

ADR Supervisor

Nicholas V. Korda

ADR Editor

Norio Sepulveda

Sound Recordists

Thomas D. Causey

ADR:

Louis Countee

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Michael Minkler

Kevin O'Connell

Bill W. Benton

ADR:

Jeff Gomillion

Foley:

Jackson Schwartz

Music:

Tim Boyle

Daniel Sharp

John W. Brilhante

Sound Transfers

Dave Moreno

Matthew Beville

Mark Coffey

Foley Artists

Zane D. Bruce

Joseph T. Sabella

Visual Consultant

Harold Michelson

Technical Advisors

Frank Ragano

Nancy L. Ragano

Stunt Co-ordinator

Andy Armstrong

Stunts

Richard Drown

Danny Aiello III

George Aguilar

Gary Baxley

Dana D. Bertolotto

Simone Boissenne

Eddie Braun

Peter Buzessi

Richard Butler

Hank Calia

Frank P. Calzavara

Rudy J. Calzavara

Ken Cervi

Enik Cord

Leon Delaney

Donna Evans

Eddie J. Fernandez I

Frank Ferrara

James Fierro

George Fisher

Tanner Gill

Mark Gintler

Stefan Gudju

John Hackett

Mark Harper

Jerry Hewitt

Robert Jauregui

Jeff Jensen

Sean Kelly Steven

Lambert Rick LeFevour

Stacy Logan

Edward Lynch

Gary Maas

Daniel Maldonado

Mike McGaughey

Robert Orrison

Richard "Pee Wee"

Piemonte

Randy Popplewell

Chere Rae

Jimmy N. Roberts

Walt Robles

Maurizio Santia

Paul E. Short

Packey Smith

Mark Stefanich

Bob Terhune

Steve Vandeman

Michael M. Vendrell

Jim Waters

Rich Wilkie

Jerry Willis

Raleigh Wilson

Cast

Jack Nicholson

James R. Hoffa

Danny DeVito

Bobby Ciaro

Armand Assante

Carol D'Allesandro

J.T. Walsh

Frank Fitzsimmons

John C. Reilly

Pete Connelly

Robert Prosky

Billy Flynn

Natalija Nogulich

Josephine Hoffa

Kevin Anderson

Attorney General

Robert F. Kennedy

Frank Whaley

Young Kid

John P. Ryan

Red Bennett

Nicholas Pryor

Hoffa's Attorney

Paul Guilfoyle

Ted Harmon

Karan Young

Young Woman at RTA

Cliff Gorman

Solly Stein

Joanne New

Soignee Woman

Joe V. Greco

Loading Foreman

Am Ochs

Kreger Worker

Joe Quasarno

Dock Worker

Don Breckhoff

Police Captain

Nicholas Giordano

Cop

1975. Former Teamsters union leader Jimmy Hoffa and his right-hand man Bobby Ciaro sit in the back of a car in a roadhouse parking lot, waiting to meet mobster Carol D'Allesandro. Ciaro talks to a young trucker and remembers the course of his relationship with Hoffa, which starts in the 1930s when he is a truck driver and Hoffa an itinerant organizer for the Teamsters. They meet later when Hoffa is trying to organize a strike at a shipping terminus. Ciaro wants to kill Hoffa for losing him his job, but joins with him and his associate Billy Flynn to firebomb a laundry; Flynn is killed. During a strike, in which several people are killed, Hoffa meets the Mafia and cuts his first deal to end the strike. At the funeral following the strike, Hoffa meets with gangster Carol D'Allesandro. On a hunting trip, Hoffa and D'Allesandro work out the means by which the Teamsters will legally loan money to the Mob for their ventures in Nevada.

At Senate hearings into the relationship between labour and organized crime, senate lawyer Bobby Kennedy warns Hoffa that he will go to prison. Hoffa is exonerated and elected as union head. Hoffa and Ciaro are arrested for the Teamsters' illegal loans; when Hoffa is released, he finds that the pardon is dependent on his remaining out of union politics. Hoping to reclaim the union, Hoffa arranges to meet D'Allesandro, threatening to reveal the Teamsters-Mob link unless he helps him. Hoffa and Ciaro are shot in the parking lot by the young trucker.

Hoffa gives the grandiose biopic treatment to the life of American labour organiser and union president Jimmy Hoffa, presumed murdered by parties unknown, presumably in a political struggle for the control of the Teamsters. Presumably, because his body has never been found. Scene to scene, Hoffa feels like a near-masterpiece. Nobody writes beefy guys sitting around a room better than David Mamet, and in this high blood-pressure cast, director DeVito has a cast capable of understanding and delivering all the fine gradations that Mamet can get from the work "Fuck". He is a fluent enough director to give scenes the necessary charge, from a battle between striking workers and management scabs to two men talking in a car. Only when the scenes are strung together, cemented by the continued returns to the parking lot, does the film's main flaw become apparent. In attempting to cover almost all of Hoffa's career, DeVito has created a picture that really has no narrative line.

On the one hand, there is too much material for a conventionally-sized movie. Hoffa's career spanned four decades, from the desperation of the Depression, when management hired goons to break the bodies and spirits of striking workers, to the 70s, when the Teamsters were the most powerful labour union in the United States. It touches on all manner of modern

American history, including the rise of Las Vegas and the death of John F. Kennedy. There is, after all, already a four-hour television film (1983's *Blood Feud*) that deals entirely with the battle between Hoffa and Bobby Kennedy.

On the other hand, DeVito has such a simplistic, even worshipful view of Hoffa that he can only see him as his hero, the plucky labour organizer who "pulled the American worker into the middle class." Well, he did, and he was a hero. But Hoffa's ambiguity frightens DeVito. The friend of the working man was also a friend to organized crime. The Teamsters Pension Fund's loans to the Mob financed the building of Caesar's Palace, the Chicago mob's purchase of the Stardust Hotel in 1974, the resurrection of The Dunes in 1956, and the completion of the landmark in 1966. Hoffa controlled those purse strings. With its Vegas connection, Hoffa is this year's *Bugsy*, an overlong biopic with a problematic view of its central character. There is even a school of conspiratorial thought that links Hoffa and the Teamsters to the assassination of Kennedy, and no tears were shed in Hoffa's office when JFK was assassinated - Hoffa saw the flags at the Teamsters' headquarters at half-mast and flew into a rage.

DeVito will not allow the young hero to become an aged tyrant, the rebel to become an aged reactionary. It seems to me that the most interesting thing about Hoffa's character lies in the moment when he moved from hungry outsider to powerful insider, when he became corrupted by his power. DeVito gives us a pointless scene noting Hoffa's election as president of the Teamsters, but never mentions the strong possibility that Hoffa rattled out his predecessor, Dave Beck, to the Justice Department.

DeVito has cut together a story from Mamet's script that redefines the word "fragmentary", refuses to locate us in time, and feels as if it were cut from four hours. Characters leap in and out of the narrative for no apparent reason - a young woman (Karen Young) receives such prominence at a strike that one assumes she's the future Mrs Hoffa, but she isn't, and promptly disappears. A demonized Bobby Kennedy has prominence as the film's chief villain, but the two Kennedy assassinations pass unnoticed. One moment Hoffa has two children, a few scenes later he's a grandfather.

Unfortunately, Hoffa forms the least interesting panel of the recent triptych of 60s assassination films, beside *JFK* and *Malcolm X*. As a director, DeVito has neither Oliver Stone's tabloid sensationalism nor Spike Lee's political dedication. Like other TV actors turned director - Rob Reiner, Penny Marshall, Ron Howard - he is technically assured and very good with actors, but lacks any particular philosophical or political viewpoint. In the light of recent video revisionism, maybe Hoffa will get the 'director's cut' treatment when it arrives on home video. Few films could benefit more.

John Harkness

Indochine

France 1991

Director: Régis Wargnier

Certificate

12

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Companies

Paradis Films and
Général D'Images/
BAC Films/Orly Films

Ciné Cinq

Executive Producers

Alain Belmondo

Gérard Crozier

Executive in Charge

of Production

Vietnam:

N'Guyen Thu

Producer

Eric Heumann

Line Producers

Eric Heumann

Jean Labadie

Associate Producers

Alain Guiraud

Pierre Héros

Roger-André Larrieu

Alain Vannier

Production Supervisor

Chandran Rutnam

Production Managers

Claude Albouze

Jean De Tregomain

Ngo Xuan Yen

Ainsley Da Silva

Edi Hubschmid

Costing

Pierre Amzallag

Assistant Directors

Jacques Cluzaud

Nguyen Lan Trung

Dane Tar Binh

Screenplay

Erik Orsenna

Louis Gardel

Catherine Cohen

Régis Wargnier

Director of Photography

François Catonné

Camera Operator

Jean-Paul Meurisse

Editor

Geneviève Winding

Production Designer

Jacques Bufnoir

Set Decorator

Errol Kelly

Special Effects

Philippe Hubin

Music

Patrick Doyle

Orchestrations

Lawrence Ashmore

Music Producer

Roy Prendegast

Music Supervisor

Maggie Rodford

Songs

"La Môme Caoutchouc"

by Maurice Yvain; "La

Baye" by M. Heurtebise.

Christine performed

by Dominique Blanc

Choreographer

Chris Gandois

Wardrobe

Gabriella Pescucci

Pierre-Yves Gayraud

Make-up

Cedric Gérard

Sound Editor

Patrice Grisolet

Sound Recordists

Chris Dibble

Guillaume Sciama

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Francis Perreard

Sound Re-recordists

Dominique Hennequin

Joel Rangon

Sound Effects

Jérôme Levy

Advisors

Asoka Perera

Historical:

Nelly Krawolski

Benjamin Stora

Cast

Catherine Deneuve

Eliane

Vincent Perez

Jean-Baptiste

Link Den Pham

Camille

Jean Yane

Guy

Dominique Blanc

Yvette

Henri Marteau

Emile

Carlo Brandt

Castellani

Gérard Lartigue

The Admiral

Hubert Saint-Macary

Raymond

Andrzej Seweryn

Hebrard

Bai Chau

Shen

Alain Fromanger

Dominique

Chu Hung

Mari de Sao

Jean-Baptiste Huynh

Etienne (as an adult)

Thibault De Montebert

Charles-Henri

Eric Nguyen

Tanh

Trinh Van Thinh

Minh

Tien Tho

Xuy

Thi Hoa Trinh Hoa Yieu

Mme Minh Tam

Nguyen Lan Trung

Kim

Nika Quayh

Sao

Michel Volta

Edmont de Beaufort

Marie Barre Antich

Child

Lam Binh

Dying Missionary

Tot Binh

The Leading Citizen

Nguyen Huu Bong

Mme Minh Tam's Client

Jean-Pierre Debris

Father Roland

Clayton Donly

Charlotte

Anny Et Lok Ee

Child in Sampan

Edgar Cherry

Auctioneer

Quang Hai

Brother of On Dinh

Hgo Hoa

Old Mandarin

Bo Hoang

Camille, age 8

Hong Khiao

Midwife

Gia Khuan

Actor (Bird Dancer)

Hoang Kiem

Actor (Kim Lan)

M. Lap

Old Man with Spectacles

Anna Lim

Old Chinese Lady

Vao Quy

Son of Sao, age 16

Dhovanhar Souplah

Satit

Bino To

The Dowager

Julia Tan

Hoa

Thuy Yen

Actress (Bird Dancer)

Ngoc Thoa

Prisoner (Paulo Condor)

Nguyen Van Thoi

Trang Vinh

Trong Thuy

Son of Sao, age 12

Joao De Tregomain

Lieutenant in Nursing

Village

Dang Si Van

The Old Man in Tonkin

Hai Yen

Theatre Musician

13,885 feet

154 minutes

Subtitles

French Indochina (Vietnam) in the early 1930s; the Vietnamese are beginning to struggle against French colonial rule. Eliane Devries runs a rubber plantation in the South, with her father and adopted teenage daughter Camille, an orphaned Vietnamese princess. She is also a friend of Guy Asselin, the local chief of the French Security police. Eliane has a short passionate affair with Jean-Baptiste, a young French naval officer; but when he later meets Camille, she falls in love with him, and Eliane has him sent to Dragon Island, a remote outpost in North Vietnam.

Camille breaks her arranged marriage to her childhood friend Tahn, and flees in search of Jean-Baptiste, discovering in the process the poverty of her country. On reaching him, she witnesses the brutal repression of Vietnamese workers at a slave market, and shoots a French officer dead. She and Jean-Baptiste flee in a small boat across the bay of Halong, from which it is alleged no-one returns alive. They are sheltered by Nationalist rebels, later joining a travelling theatre group spreading rebellion under cover of their traditional spectacle. Camille gives birth to a son, Etienne. Jean-Baptiste and the baby are arrested, and eventually Camille is sent to a labour camp, as her legend as the 'red princess' grows.

Meanwhile, Eliane brings the baby up. On his way to be court-martialled in France, Jean-Baptiste visits his son, but is later found dead, having apparently committed suicide (though Asselin may have had him killed). When the 1936 Popular Front government proclaims political amnesty, Camille is released from the camp. Eliane goes to meet her, but Camille decides to break free and join the Independence struggle. Eliane leaves Vietnam for good, taking Etienne with her. Much later, they attend the 1954 Geneva conference negotiating the end of French rule in Indochina. Camille is part of the Vietnamese delegation, but Etienne declines to meet her, telling Eliane, "You are my mother".

Indochine is a successful film insofar as the reasons why it is worth watching are the reasons why it was made: Catherine Deneuve and the Vietnamese landscape. As a recreation of the French colonial past, on the other hand, it leaves a lot to be desired. But then, like most heritage films, *Indochine* (the title itself is nostalgic) is less interested in analysing a historical moment than in celebrating its memory and mourning its loss. Thus, appropriately, the film opens and closes on Deneuve in black, and it is littered with references to deaths and separations.

Unsurprisingly for a mainstream entertainment, instead of hitting on the underlying political and economic reasons for the French presence in Vietnam, *Indochine* (like Jean-Jacques Annaud's *L'Amant*) dwells on exotic and nostalgic iconography: Deneuve's exquisite outfits, cars and gramophones, the 'inscrutable' faces of the

locals, pointed hats, and the obligatory opium-smoking paraphernalia. The burden of the 'real' (exploitation, repression, torture) is borne largely by the character of Guy Asselin, the Security police chief whose brutal methods are briefly exposed and condemned – but the effect of even this intrusion is diminished by the fact that Asselin is in love with Eliane, and that he is played by Jean Yanne, an actor with a long-established image as a likeable rogue. The other token of colonial malfunction is the naval officers' implication in the slave market at Dragon Island, but this too is exonerated in two ways: by showing the participation of the Vietnamese in it, and by concentrating the 'bad' colonial ideology in the figure of the decadent cynic whom Camille shoots.

'Good' colonialism, of course, is embodied by Eliane/Deneuve. The matrilineal vision of history offered by the film enables it to represent French imperialism as not only liberal, but natural. In the very obvious central metaphor of the film, Eliane-France adopts Camille-Vietnam; she 'inherits' Camille's land on the convenient disappearance of her parents, and nurtures the frail child into a good and enlightened life (in the same way as the young revolutionary Tanh learnt the very concept of freedom in the French education system); the onset of revolution is echoed in the birth of Etienne. Togetherness – of mother and daughter, of France and Vietnam – is a state of blissful childhood, and therefore one to be universally regretted when it is over. More pervasively, Eliane, while imbued with 'masculine' qualities of leadership and courage, is a universal mother: to Camille and later Etienne, but also to her own (weak) father; to Jean-Baptiste; to her Vietnamese workers; and even to Asselin. In the absence of heroic male deeds to attach to French rule in Vietnam (the film erases military conflict and most significantly the crushing defeat of the French army at Dien Bien Phu in 1954), the abstract heroism of the suffering mother, doubling up as tough leader, celebrates the symbolic notion of France as universal *mère patrie* (literally mother-fatherland). But as well as a mother, Eliane is a sexual woman. *Indochine* in this respect provides the classic pleasures of the romantic women's film: a beautiful, tragic but resilient, female heroine struggles on, surrounded by adoring men who nevertheless fail her, providing the mature Deneuve with her best part in many years.

Given the self-serving French version of history offered by *Indochine*, Vietnam is inevitably turned into a spectacle (and a sexual one, for instance in the two narratively unnecessary shots of Camille's naked breasts) – though a spectacle which is often more than a backdrop, especially in the breathtaking shots of the bay of Halong. It is a major, and enjoyable, participant in the story, its beauty reinforcing the film's deep sense of nostalgia.

Ginette Vincendeau

Leap of Faith

USA 1992

Director: Richard Pearce

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount Pictures

Executive Producer

Ralph S. Singleton

Producers

Michael Manheim

David V. Picker

Associate Producers

Janus Cercone

Burt Bluestein

Roger Joseph Pugliese

Production Associate

Steven Lukanic

Unit Production Managers

Burt Bluestein

Roger Joseph Pugliese

Location Managers

William Bowling

Mike Casey

2nd Unit Director

Garth Craven

Costing

Gretchen Rennell

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

Doug Metzger

Anthony Brand

Linda Brachman

Brian Steward

Xochi Blymyer

2nd Unit:

John E. Hockridge

Screenplay

Janus Cercone

Director of Photography

Matthew F. Leonetti

Colour

Deluxe

2nd Unit Directors

Lloyd Ahern

Roger Lee Smith

Camera Operator

David E. Diano

Steadicam Operators

Ted Churchill

Peter Jensen

Video Displays

Video Image

Editors

Don Zimmerman

Mark Warner

John F. Burnett

Production Designer

Patrizia Von

Brandenstein

Art Director

Dennis Bradford

Set Decorator

Gretchen Rau

Set Dressers

John Cenicerio

Paul Perry

Jean-Paul Menard

Special Effects

Burt Dalton

Eddie Surkin

Music

Cliff Eidelman

Orchestrations

Mark McKenzie

Dennis Dreith

Music Supervisors

Kathy Nelson

Production:

Daniel Allan Carlin

Supervising Music Editors

Jeff Carson

Charles Martin Inouye

Songs

"Sit Down You're

Rockin' the Boat"

by Frank Loesser,

performed by Don

Henley; "Paradise by

the Dashboard Light"

by Jim Steinman,

performed by Meat

Loaf; "Change In My

Life" by Billy Straus,

"Ready For A Miracle"

by Art Reynolds, Bunny

Hull, "Blessed

Assurance" by Fanny

J. Crosby, Mrs Joseph

F. Knapp, "Lord Will

Make A Way

(Somehow) by Thomas

A. Dorsey, "God Said

He Would See You

Through" by Rev.

Milton R. Biggiam,

"My Faith Looks Up

to Thee" by Ray Palmer,

Lowell Mason, "God

Will Take Care of You"

by Edwin Hawkins,

"It's A Highway to

Heaven" by Mary

Gardner, Thomas

A. Dorsey, "Jesus on

the Mainline" by

Edwin Hawkins,

George Duke,

"Bringing in the

Sheaves" by Knowles

Shaw, George A. Minor,

"Psalm 27", "Amazing

Grace" by John

Newton, performed

by Angels of Mercy;

"What It Takes" by

and performed by

Brendan Croker;

"Stones Throw

From Hurtin'" by Elton

John, Bernie Taupin,

performed by Wynonna;

"No Future in the Past"

by Carl Jackson, Vince

Gill, performed by

Vince Gill; "Pass

Me Not" by Fanny

J. Crosby, W. H. Duane,

performed by Lyle

Lovett, George Duke;

"Yakety Yak" by Jerry

Leiber, Mike Stoller;

"Ready For A Miracle"

by Art Reynolds, Bunny

Hull, performed by

Patti Labelle, Edwin

Hawkins; "Organ

Interludes" by

Jerry Peters

Choreography

Sharon Kinney

Mary Ann Kellogg

Costume Design

Theadora Van Runkle

Costume Supervisor

Nancy McArdle

Make-up Artists

Key,

Bradley W. Wilder

Frank H. Griffin Jr

Karen Blynder

Regina Rutherford

Rhonda Higgins

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

Bruce Richardson

Cecelia Hall

Sound Editors

Dialogue:

Michael Magill

Karen Spangenberg

Midge Costin

Supervising ADR Editor

June J. Ellis

ADR Editor

Steven Janisz

Supervising Foley Editor

Pam Bentowski

Foley Editors

Tom Stevens

Jim Klinger

Sound Recordists

Petur Hliddal

ADR:

Bob Baron

Foley:

Eric Gotthelf

Music:

Joseph Magee

Armin Steiner

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Steve F. B. Smith

Sound Re-recordists

Andy Nelson

Steve Maslow

Steve M. Pederson

Sound Effects Editors

Joseph Ippolito

Beth Sterner

John Leveque

Frank Howard

Foley Artists

David Lee Fein

Ken Duva

Medical Consultant

Dr John F. Zambetti

Cars and Trucks

Commitment

Ricky Jay

Butterfly Handlers

Jim Brockett

Chris Durden

Agonomists

Clay D Salisbury

Brent W Bean

Cast

Steve Martin

Jonas

Debra Winger

Jane

Lolita Davidovich

Marva

Liam Neeson

Will

Lukas Haas

Boyd

Meat Loaf

Hoover

Philip Seymour Hoffman

Matt

W.C. Sullivan

Tiny

La Chance

Georgette

Debrah Faller

Ornella

John Tolo-Boy

Titus

Albertina Walker

Lucille

Ricky Dillard

Ricky

Vince Davis

Roger

Trey Evans

Dade

Phyllis Somerville

Dolores

David L. Emmons

Jerry Joe

Mark Walters

Calvin

James H. Harrell

Ramsey

Vernon Grete

Rafe

Mary Jackson

Emma Schlarp

Margaret Bowman

Woman With

Cherries Hat

Jennifer Snyder

Gutter Jeans Girl

Deborah Hope

Gutter Jeans Mother

Ed K. Goldart

Brown Jacket

Marietta Marich

Mrs Hawkins

Grover Washington

Old Black Man

Sari McLaughlin

Weather Worn Woman

Salvador Hernandez

Young Man

◀ shaking, shuddering and slapping them down with exaggerated relish.

But Jonas is not always in full control; he's also seen as childishly impotent: despite Jane's barbed comments about him picking up women on the road, his efforts to attract Marva seem touching rather than sexual. In fact, contrasted with the sensuality between Jane and Will, Jonas seems curiously sexless. That dimension of sympathy for Jonas and Jane makes for a resolutely amoral film. While we might agree with the sentiments of Liam's Neeson's stoical sheriff, concerned with his people's social and political situation, we're asked to share at least some of Jonas and Jane's attitude that people are happy to pay for their cathartic show, complete with lights, glitter and entertainment. The question the film should ask, perhaps, is how complicit the audience really is in the deception.

Leap Of Faith's attitude towards the religious followers puts it in more of a quandary. Firstly, there's an irritating implication in the idea that Jonas' black gospel singers believe in him because they're stupid enough to – hence one scene in which Jonas explains the word of God to a couple of black women in full, eye-rolling Butterfly McQueen mode – while the white townsfolk come to Jonas out of despair at their lives. The amalgamation of black gospel and white evangelism also smacks of the sickly all-togetherness of *Sister Act*, paying little attention to harsher realities.

Secondly, the role of the believers in the film changes abruptly. One minute, they're characterised as Jonas's dupes; the next, their naive belief is proved right. As the rather ponderous title suggests, miracles do happen: Jonas has to learn what they (and particularly Boyd) already know – how to take a leap of faith. And so the film opts for the *It's A Wonderful Life* approach to joy – one happy man and the big happy crowd. But unlike Capra's film, in which the emotional release is a necessary step, here it comes over as sticky icing on the cake and an inadequately sentimental replacement for its earlier, noisier cynicism.

When the jokey satire on religion-turned-big-business in the technological age can't come up with a suitable way out, it turns into an American folk tale, sweeping everything up into grand mythic significance with the coming of the rain and the parable of the crippled boy who walks again. Though Lukas Haas does a great job of portraying the saintly Boyd with the minimum of gush, everything about the film – from Martin's loadedly funny set pieces to the strong performances from Winger, Neeson and Davidovich – is considerably more entertaining before it shifts from negative to positive. Perhaps it should have been more magically shameless: looking to its Kansas-set predecessor, *The Wizard of Oz*, for a less workaday attitude to the mid-West myth.

Amanda Lipman

Mediterraneo

Italy 1991

Director: Gabriele Salvatores

Certificates
15

Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment

Production Companies
Penta Film/AMA Film/
Silvio Berlusconi
Communications

Executive Producers
Mario Cecchi Gori
Vittorio Cecchi Gori

Producer
Gianni Minervini

Production Managers
Alessandro Vivarelli
Nicola Forte

Assistant Director
Antonella Licata

Screenplay
Vincenzo Monteleone

Director of Photography
Italo Pettriccione

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operator

Cristina Balboni

Editor

Nino Baragli

Art Director

Thalia Istikopoulos

Set Dresser

E. Rancati

Special Effects

G. Corridori

Music

Giancarlo Bigazzi

Marco Falagiani

Music Performed by

Ensemble Micrologus

Santouri/Bouzouki:

Adolfo Broegg

Gavala/Bagpipes:

Zurnae:

Goffredo degli Esposti

Tubelaki/Daouli:

Percussion:

Maurizio Picchio

Ribeca/Lyre/Violin:

Gabriele Russo

Drums:

Massimo Pacciani

Guitar:

Riccardo Galardini

Saxophone:

Massimo Barbieri

Music Arrangements

Marco Falagiani

Costume Design

Francesco Panini

Make-up Artist

Luigi Rocchetti

Titles

Penta Studios

Sound Recordists

Tiziano Crotti

Music:

Massimo Barbieri

Sound Re-recordists

Rodolfo Bianchi

Music:

Romano Checacci

Cast

Diego Abatantuono

Sergeant Lo Russo

Claudio Bigazzi

Lieutenant Montini

Giuseppe Cederna

Farina

Claudio Bisio

Noventa

Gigio Alberti

Strazzabosco

Ugo Conti

Colosanti

Memo Dini

Felice Munaron

Vasco Mirandola

Libero Munaron

Vanna Barba

Vasilissa

Luigi Montini

Pope

Irene Grazioli

Shepherdess

Antonio Catania

Pilot

8,988 feet

90 minutes

Subtitles

At the outbreak of the Second World War, eight Italian soldiers, together with a donkey, are posted to a remote island in the Aegean to defend it for the Fascists. The group comprises the cultured Lieutenant Montini, the unloved orphan Farina, the brothers Felice and Libero Munaron, who dislike the sea, the obstreperous Lo Russo, the forlorn Strazzabosco, who adores his pet donkey, the pining Noventa, who can't wait to return to his pregnant wife, and the shy Colosanti. When they arrive, they are confronted by graffiti declaiming "Greece is the tomb of Italians"; during their first-night vigil, they hear suspicious sounds and, panicking, accidentally kill the donkey. Grief-stricken Strazzabosco hurls the unit's radio to the ground, breaking it. The same evening, they see a series of explosions destroy their battleship, effectively cutting them off from the war and their mother country.

Farina discovers a crowd of children who lead the Italians to a small Greek community whose young men have been taken prisoner by the Germans. Slowly, the soldiers begin to relax, seduced by the island's leisurely way of



Club 1945: Claudio Bisio

life. Montini is invited to paint frescoes on the walls of the local chapel, the two brothers embark on a playful ménage à trois with a beautiful shepherdess, Farina begins to appreciate ancient Greek poetry and falls in love with Vasilissa, the prostitute who services his colleagues; and Lo Russo finds an outlet for his macho posturing in folk dancing. When a Turkish trader arrives, supplying them with hashish before stealing their weapons and valuables, the men feel liberated rather than dismayed. With the exception of Noventa, they vote to settle on the island. Farina marries Vasilissa, while Strazzabosco finds a new donkey.

One day, a Sicilian makes an emergency landing on the island, bringing news that Mussolini has fallen, Italy is in a state of civil war and Fascism is on the run. Lo Russo dreams of returning to help rebuild the country. Some time later, an English ship arrives to return all the young Greek men captured by the Germans, and to take back the Italians to their native land. Farina hides so that he can stay behind, while Strazzabosco takes his donkey with him. Many years later, an elderly Montini visits the island, now overrun by tourists, to look up Farina. To his surprise, he finds a disillusioned Lo Russo there as well. Vasilissa has died and the three men reflect that life after their idyllic interlude has failed to live up to their expectations.

With a handful of exceptions, cinematic images of the Mediterranean have become depressingly superficial, offering blissful release from tawdry routine and bleak Northern cityscapes in blood-red sunsets, the strains of a bouzouki and a shot of ouzo. Such movies used to be made with wit and irony – Jules Dassin's *Never on Sunday*, for example. Sadly, they have lapsed into the likes of *Shirley Valentine* and the tired jollity

of the down-market travelogue.

Gabriele Salvatores' escapist comedy, loosely based on a true story, falls into all the familiar traps. It rests too comfortably for its own good on a string of clichés: lovable, incompetent Italian soldiers ("Pizza Margherita" is their first password), thieving Turks, pink-faced, stiff-backed English officers, a virgin looking for love, a buxom whore with a heart, and any amount of balmy evenings of hard drinking and soft landings. "Una faccia, una razza" ("One face, one race") is the theme, that cry of Southern Mediterranean solidarity which unites those who champion the hedonistic life against those who are too uptight to enjoy it.

Salvatores is most successful in his depiction of war as a suspension of normal activity which, given some good fortune, can be as uplifting as it is traumatic. If the team of soldiers at times appear to be on an extended 'Simply Greece' package holiday, this is no doubt how it was for those lucky enough to find romance, exoticism and peace amid the mayhem. A couple of *Mediterraneo's* protagonists, when their idyll comes to an end, look forward to a bright new future in their homeland ("There are great ideals at stake and a lot of money to be made," says one of them), but disappointment inexorably looms. "We'll build a great nation," promises the bellicose Lo Russo; the domesticated Farina, however, declares that he feels most alive inside his olive barrel refuge. In a surprisingly bitter coda, both men are found on the island many years later by their former commander, having coped with death and disillusionment ("They didn't let us change anything," complains Lo Russo). The end of the film sees them peeling aubergines in the back of a noisy taverna full of teenage tourists, reflecting soberly on the reality of their Mediterranean experience.

Peter Aspin

A Midnight Clear

USA 1991

Director: Keith Gordon

Certificate
15

Distributor
Rank

Production Company
Beacon Communications present an A&M Films production

Executive Producers
Arman Bernstein
Tom Rosenberg
Marc Abraham

Producers
Dale Pollock
Bill Borden

Associate Producer
Margaret Hilliard

Production Associate
Jenny Manriquez

Production Co-ordinator
Judi Vaye

Unit Production Manager
Margaret Hilliard

Location Manager
Carole Fontana

Post-production Co-ordinator
Jenny Manriquez

Costing
Gary Zuckerbrod

Assistant Directors
Scott Javine
Andrew Langton
Troy Rohovit

Screenplay
Keith Gordon
Based on the novel by William Wharton

Director of Photography
Tom Richmond

Colour
CPI

2nd Camera Operator
Patrick Reddish

Editor
Donald Brochu

Production Designer
David Nichols

Art Director
David Lubin

Set Design
Kalina Ivanov
Jeff McDonald

Set Decorator
Janis Lubin

Scenic Artists
Ed McAvoy
Gigi Lorick
John Chad Davis

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Rick Josephsen

Sculptor
Gay Nickle Lauritzen

Musik
Mark Isham

Songs
"The Jersey Bounce" by Buddy Feyne, Bobby Platter, Tina Bradshaw, Edward Johnson: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" performed by Sam Phillips

Costume Design
Barbara Tlank

Costume Supervisor
Lawane Cole

Make-up
Gina Homan

Special Make-up Effects
Doug White

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Sound Design
Douglas Murray

Sound Editor
John Nutt

ADR Editor
Mark Levinson

Foley Editor
Samuel H. Hinckley

Sound Recordists
John "Earl" Stein
Dan Olmsted

Foley Recordist
Michael Semonick

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Mark Berger
David Parker

Foley Artists
Margie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers

Technical Advisors
C'est la Guerre
Snow Management

Arts Kohler
Phil Sharp

Musik Consultant
G. Mark Roswell

Stunt Co-ordinator
Steve Davison

Stunts
Tim Davison
Norman Howell
Paul Godwin
Chad Camilleri

Cost
Peter Berg
Bud Miller

Kevin Dillon
Mel Avakian

Arye Gross
Stan Shutzer

Ethan Phillips
Will Knott

Gary Sinise
"Mother" Wilkins

Frank Whaley
"Father" Mundy

John C. McKinley
Major Griffin

Larry Joshua
Lieutenant Ware

Curt Lowens
German Soldier

David Jensen
Sergeant Hunt

Rachel Griffin
Janice

Tim Shoemaker
Morrie

Nelly Catalay
Young German

Bill Osborn
American Sentry

Andre Lualaba
German

9,753 feet
106 minutes

The Ardennes, 1944. US Army Sergeant Will Knott (known as Wont) witnesses the breakdown of Wilkins ('Mother') whilst on guard duty. Wont manages to keep the incident quiet. His Intelligence and Reconnaissance unit is down to six (Avakian, Miller, 'Father' Mundy, Stan Shutzer) from 12, thanks to the cavalier missions that Major (Love) Griffin keeps sending them on. En route to occupy an isolated chateau, Wont's unit are

unsettled to find a German and an American soldier locked together in a frozen embrace.

At the chateau they find mattresses, blankets and cases of vintage wine but no sign of enemy soldiers. Their sojourn is shattered one night when unseen German voices urge them to sleep well. After Wont and Father find Germans lobbing snowballs into their sentry post, the unit finds a shack occupied by young soldiers but are unable to shoot their easy targets. Shutzer and Wont are surprised by three other Germans who despite having the Americans in their sights let them walk away. In the confusion, Schutzer loses his telescope lens and map. Further incidents convince Wont that the Germans want to meet. It turns out that the Germans wish to surrender, but they request a mock battle to convince the approaching Russian front soldiers of their bravery. The Americans decide to play along, but don't tell Mother because they feel he cannot be relied upon. The mock battle goes smoothly until a German drops dead from a bullet wound. Mother, having followed the others, misinterprets the action and decides to rescue his unit. Suspecting a double cross, the Germans fire back, wounding Schutzer and killing Mundy. Mundy's dying wish is for Mother not to be told, so that his bravery can be rewarded by the Army.

Griffin arrives and chastises Wont for the sloppy use of the chateau, ordering him and the remaining three soldiers to stay until the German offensive begins. Lumbered with Mundy's body, the group beat a hasty retreat. A return to base reveals that Griffin has already pulled out. Lost and forced to abandon their vehicle, Wont and the others evade capture by painting red crosses on themselves with Mundy's blood and carry the body across the frozen countryside. They encounter their own unit, and Wont's story of capture and escape from the SS is accepted. He is told of Shutzer's death and told he can return to the front.

William Wharton's *A Midnight Clear* (1982) was seized on by many critics as the next *Catch-22*. But this was a knee-jerk reaction to the more absurdist elements in the novel, specifically embodied by the anally compromised mind of Griffin, a mortician in civilian life, who dreams of military glory by bestowing a series of nightmare missions on his unit. However, Wharton took the trouble to look back beyond World War 2 by having Wont's men read *All Quiet On The Western Front* and *A Farewell To Arms* before setting off on their next suicide mission.

In so doing the author clearly distanced himself from the cold objective surrealism of Heller, and paved the way for his heroes' encounter with the boy soldiers on the opposing side (cf. Remarque), as well as their attempt to break away from the rituals of warfare by making a "separate peace" with the enemy (as Hemingway's Lt Henry does by deserting the Army with his lover in

Farewell). One of the strengths of director-writer Keith Gordon's adaptation is the dovetailing of these literary anti-war landmarks with more cynical cinematic reference points (specifically Robert Aldrich) without losing Wharton's humanistic tone.

The film begins familiarly with the establishment of the wet-behind-the-ears platoon and the muddy haemoglobinised terrain they are fighting on. Once the unit is dispatched away from the Army into the forest (the dirty dozen having been whittled down to a cerebral six), the film successfully teases expectations by using genre familiarity to its own advantage. The grotesque splicing together by an unknown presence of the German and American soldiers found in the snow alludes to *Deliverance* (a frozen hand sticks out of the ground pointing nowhere) and Walter Hill's *Southern Comfort*; but Gordon shies away from any exercises in macho suffering, allowing a more languid disorientation process to unfold with the unit's arrival at the chateau.

Paring down the novel's rather thick-eared theological subtext (provided by an ongoing discussion on faith between Wont and 'Father' Mundy), Gordon chooses to highlight the unit's desperate attempt to maintain familial security. With a 'mother' and 'father' in tow, the remaining four men are portrayed very much as innocent children, brimming with intelligence and utterly bewildered by the behaviour of the adults around them. This lends an added poignancy to the film's climactic announcement that the surviving quartet were never reunited (Gordon's only departure from the book). Not only does the war not provide a buddy-bonding exercise, it irrevocably shatters any semblance of domestic unity. Juxtaposing humorous set pieces (Miller's practice struts as an officer, echoing Donald Sutherland's promotion in *The Dirty Dozen*) with some extremely moving sequences, *A Midnight Clear* builds up considerable emotive momentum and admirably succeeds in ringing a fresh variation on the 'war-is-hell' philosophy.

Farah Anwar



Jeepers creepers:

Night of the Living Dead

USA 1990

Director: Tom Savini

Certificate
Not yet issued

Distributor
Blue Dolphin

Production Company
21st Century Productions

Executive Producers
George A. Romero
Menahem Golan

Co-executive Producer
Ami Arzi

Producers
John A. Russo
Russell Streiner

Line Producer
Declan Baldwin

Associate Producer
Christine Romero

Production Supervisor
Donna Solomon

Production Co-ordinator
Janice F. Sperling

Unit Production Manager
Marc S. Fischer

Location Supervisor
Scott Hornbacher

Post-production Supervisor
Mark S. Hoerr

Casting
Meredith Jacobson
Donna Belajac

Assistant Directors
Nick Mastandrea
Margie Sperling

Screenplay
George A. Romero
Based on the screenplay *Night of the Living Dead* by John A. Russo, George A. Romero

Director of Photography
Frank Prinzi

Colour
TVC

Camera Operator
David Frederick

Editor
Tom Dubensky

Production Designer
Cletus R. Anderson

Art Director
James Peng

Set Decorator
Brian J. Stonestreet

Set Dressers
Ralph R. Pivrotto
Megan Graham

Scenic Artists
Richard S. Sheridan
Vincent Borrelli

Head:
Kathryn A. Borland

Storyboard Artist
Brad Hunter

Pyrotechnic Special Effects
Matt Vogel

Musik
Paul McCollough

Musik Arrangements
Chris Pangikas

Costume Design
Barbara Anderson

Wardrobe Supervisor
Nancy A. Palmatier

Make-up
Jeanne Josefczyk

Special Make-up Effects
John Vulich
Everett Burrell

Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor
Thomas Pettinato

Sound Editors
Marva Fucci
Richard Burton
Stewart Nelsen
Fred Wassner

Sound Recordist
Felipe Borrero

ADR/Foley Recordists
Neil Lambert
Preston Oliver

Foley Artists
Pat Cycone
Frank Montano

ADR/Foley:
Tommy Goodwin

Jim Chilton
Joseph Sabella

Stunt Co-ordinator
Phil Nielson

Stunts
Michael C. Russo
Greg Smerz
Tony Washington
Mick O'Rourke
Donald Hewitt

Cast
Tony Todd
Ben
Patricia Tallman
Barbara
Tom Towles
Harry
McKee Anderson
Heleen
William Burtin
Tom
Kato Finneran
Judy Rose
Bill Mosley
Johnnie
Heather Blazer
Sarah
David Butler
Hondo
Zachary Wolt
Bulldog
Pat Roosa
Mourner
William Cameron
Newsman
Pat Logan
Uncle Rege
Berle Ellis
Flaming Zombie
Bill "Chilly Billy" Cardillo
TV Interviewer
Greg Fink
Cemetery Zombie
Tim Carrier
Autopsy Zombie
John Hamilton
Crowbar Zombie
Dyck Ashton
Truck Zombie
Jordan Boriant
Porch Zombie
Albert Shellenhammer
Cousin Satchel
Jay McDowell
Front Door Zombie
Walter Berry
McGruder
Kendal Kraft
Bob Evans Zombie
David Green
Policeman Zombie
Stacie Foster
Doll's Mom Zombie
Charles Crawley
Window Zombie

3,540 feet
96 minutes

Rural Pennsylvania. When Barbara and her brother Johnnie visit their mother's grave in an isolated cemetery they are attacked by zom-



Mommie dearest: Stacie Foster

◀ bies, who kill Johnnie and pursue Barbara to a farmhouse. The dead, who hunger for human flesh, can only be destroyed by a shot in the brain. Barbara is joined by Ben, a black man. They find guns in the house and discover other survivors in the basement: Harry and Helen Cooper, their injured daughter Sarah and a young couple, Tom and Judy Rose. Harry, who thinks their best chance of survival lies in hiding in the cellar, and Ben, who wants to fortify the house, argue but everyone co-operates in commandeering a truck. The escape attempt fails when Tom tries to unlock a petrol pump with a shotgun blast, thereby causing an explosion in which he and Judy are burned to death.

At the house, Helen is killed by Sarah, who has turned into a zombie. Harry steals Barbara's gun, and when Ben tries to destroy Sarah, the men have a shoot-out in which both are wounded. Barbara goes for help and the zombies overwhelm the house, driving Harry into the attic and Ben into the cellar. Barbara joins up with a crowd hunting down the zombies for sport, and returns to the farmhouse just as posse members are breaking through into the cellar to shoot the zombie Ben. Harry, still alive, comes down from the attic and Barbara murders him. The posse gather up the twice-dead corpses and make a bonfire.

George A. Romero's seminal horror film has already inspired two official sequels, sundry parodies and too many imitations to cite. With all this attention, the 1968 film was hardly in need of a colour remake; this enterprise was embarked on partly because a rights quirk meant that if the original production team did not undertake a remake, then anyone else could do so.

That said, this is as good a job as one has the right to expect, compressing the major plot points of the original into its first four-fifths and then coming up with disturbing new twists, vaguely inspired by *Straw Dogs*, capping Barbara's statement about the zombies – "We are them and they are us" – with her startling murder of Harry. Most cannily, Romero and Savini do not reproduce well-remembered shocks, playing a major trick on *Living Dead* fans as the shambling bum in the first

scene (an unforgettable monster in 1968) turns out to be a red herring, a precursor of the unexpected appearance of the first attacking zombie.

Revising the original screenplay he wrote with John Russo, Romero shears away much of the 'scientific' explanation, 60s social satire and commentary on the media reaction to the crisis, concentrating instead on the divisions in the small group of survivors. Occasionally further ironies – like the suggestion that the horde of flesh-eaters outside the farmhouse has not been attracted by the scent of living meat, but by the sound of carpentry as the besieged fortify the place – are layered in. Ben and his bigoted adversary Harry remain essentially as they were, to the point of appearing anachronistic. They gain in stature from the near-ironic cachet of Tony Todd (*Candyman*) and Tom Towles (*Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer*), who model their performances, down to the smallest ticks, on Duane Jones and Karl Hardman in the original. The major character alteration is Patricia Tallman's Barbara, given a post-Sigourney Weaver spin when her traumatised reaction to her brother's death is not to become catatonic but to turn into a guerrilla fighter. As in *Alien*, the presence of a strong female survivor requires the secondary female, Judy, to be a panicky whiner who rushes stupidly to her own death. It is ironic that the 1990 Barbara's anti-zombie violence is seen to be as insane as her 1968 predecessor's retreat into a psychological shell.

Tom Savini, in a directorial debut which follows a few episodes of *Tales from the Darkside* and various unofficial second-unit chores, intelligently refrains from going overboard on gore gags. With resources unavailable to the original – an original score rather than stock music, convincing make-up, consistent lighting, professional actors – he manages to bring up to standard the sometimes rosey qualities of the first film. However, this movie does contain a few too many hand-through-the-window shock tricks and suffers by comparison with the original. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* was so much of its time, yet such an important and influential gift to posterity that any remake is doomed to be a footnote.

Kim Newman

One False Move

USA 1992

Director: Carl Franklin

Certificate
18

Distributor

Metro Pictures

Production Company

I.R.S. Media

International

Executive Producers

Miles A. Copeland III

Paul Colichman

Harold Welb

Producers

Jesse Beaton

Ben Myron

Executives in Charge of Production

Toni Phillips

Steven Reich

Production Executives

Kevin Reidy

Melissa Cobb

Line Producer

Tony To

Production Controller

Rachel Villa

Production Co-ordinators

John P. Melfi

2nd Unit:

Rachel Villa

2nd Unit Production Manager

Michael Cain

Location Managers

Michael Cain

William Buck

Post-production

Supervisor

Graham Stumpf

Casting

Don Pemrick

Assistant Directors

Michael Grossman

Tony Schwartz

Jim Wiggins

2nd Unit:

John Vohlers

Screenplay

Billy Bob Thornton

Tom Epperson

Director of Photography

James L. Carter

In colour

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Janecz Kaminsky

"B" Camera Operator

Paul Edwards

Steadicam Operator

John Neuler

24 Frame Video

Van Scarborough

Editor

Carole Kravetz

Production Designer

Gary T. New

Art Director

Dana Torrey

Set Decorator

Troy Myers

Set Dresser

Julie Crane

Storyboard Artist

Ray Prado

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Guy Faria

Music

Peter Haycock

Derek Holt

Music performed by

Guitar Soloists:

Pete Haycock

Eric Gale

Flute Soloist:

Patricia Cloud

Acoustic Bass Soloist:

Terry Plumeri

Harmonicas:

Charles Meeks

Pete Haycock

Percussionists:

Luis Perez

Brad Dutz

Orchestrations

Terry Plumeri

Music Supervisor

Paul Di Franco

Music Editor

Frank McKelvey

Songs

"Don't Walk Away

From Love" by Michael

Sutton, Brenda Sutton,

performed by Brenda

Sutton; "Show You

Right" by and

performed by Michael

Sutton II; "Jesus Is

Leading Me" by

Michael Sutton, Brenda

Sutton, performed by

Reverend Julian

Turner; "Rock Me With

Your Love" by Odette

Springer, Matt Ender;

"I Can't Stop Cryin'"

by Deborah Holland

Costume Design

Ron Leamon

Wardrobe

Henry Earl Lewis

Make-up Artists

Elaine Offers

Jason Gade

Titles/Opticals

Title House

Supervising Sound Editor

David Lewis Yewdall

Sound Editors

Stacey A. Foiles

Paul Jyrala

Christopher J. Lewis

Dialogue:

Steve Rice

ADR Editor

Barbara J. Boguski

Sound Recordists

Ken Segal

Larry Hoki

Sound Re-recordists

Supervisor:

Jeffrey Perkins

Bruce Stambler

Foley Artists

Vanessa Ament

Heather McPherson

Consultant

Seth Willenson

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Cadiente

Stunts

Alton Jones

Danny Welis

Kim Washington

Tierre Turner

Cast

Bill Paxton

Dale "Hurricane"

Dixon

Cynda Williams

Fantasia/Lila

Billy Bob Thornton

Ray Malcolm

Michael Beach

Pluto

Am Metzler

Dud Cole

Earl Billings

McFeely

Natalie Canaday

Cheryl Ann

Robert Ginnivan

Charlie

Robert Anthony Bell

Byron

Kevin Hunter

Ronnie

Phyllis Kirklin

Mrs Walker

Meredith "Jeta" Donovan

Bonnie

James D. Bridges

Bobby

Phyllis Sutton

Jackie

Derrick Williams

Darren

June Jones

Danielle

Loren Tyler

Marco

Deniese Payne

Marco's Wife

Curtis York

Jeremiah

Jeff Bailey

Harlan Childress

Lilli Rouleau

Mrs Childress

Walter Norman

Arkansas State Trooper

Rebecca Ortese

Fern

Jackie Stewart

Truck Driver

Leslie Mauldin

Driver's Wife

Steven Reich

Car Salesman

Leo Tillman

June Hawkins

9,487 feet

105 minutes

South Central L.A. A young black man is shooting a video at his birthday party when a friend, Fantasia, lets in her white boyfriend Ray and his black partner Pluto, who beat up the guests to discover the whereabouts of Marco, a local drug dealer. Ray and Fantasia then visit Marco and get him to reveal his stash of cocaine and money; while Ray strangles the witnesses, Pluto stabs the partygoers. Ray asks Fantasia to look for Marco's child; she finds him but decides to say nothing. Detectives Cole and McFeely identify the gang and get a possible destination from Fantasia's voice on the party video – Star City, Alabama, where Ray has an uncle. Local police chief Dale Hawkins is contacted, and he confirms that the uncle's house is a likely hideout. Cole and McFeely fly down south and accompany Hawkins as he visits Ray's uncle. That night Hawkins' wife tells Cole how excited Dale is to be in on a big case.

Pluto insists that the gang head for Huston to sell to his drug connection, Billy. He sees his and Ray's pictures in a newspaper and they switch cars. In a roadside store, Ray and Fantasia meet a suspicious traffic cop who follows their car and pulls them over, but Fantasia shoots him.

Hawkins overhears Cole and McFeely mocking his ambitions, but stifles his pride to tell them about the shooting. When a picture taken from a store video camera arrives, he recognises Fantasia as local girl Lila Walker. They visit Lila's mother, brother and five-year-old son. McFeely suspects that there was once something between Hawkins and Lila.

In Huston, the gang have to wait a day for Billy. Lila suggests that she go ahead to Arkansas. Her brother meets her outside town to warn her off, but she insists on seeing her child. They arrange to meet later at an empty house. When Billy returns to Huston, he tries to back out of the deal, and Ray and Pluto shoot him and his cohorts. Pluto wants to split the money but Ray discovers that Lila has taken most of it. Lila's brother sneaks her son out to the car at night, but Hawkins follows. The following morning, Hawkins confronts Lila; it turns out that he is the father of her child. Cole and McFeely visit the Walkers and ask the child to retrace the route to his mother. As Ray and Pluto arrive at Lila's hideout, she waves them in to where Hawkins is waiting.

He wounds Ray, is stabbed by and shoots Pluto, and is himself wounded outside. Ray shoots Lila through the head and Hawkins guns Ray down. The detectives arrive with the boy and, as Hawkins lies bleeding, he talks to his son for the first time.

The route from LA to the dusty roads of Arkansas reverses the direction of the great black migration from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North and West. In the Afro-American imagination, this journey is still a metaphor for going home. Whether or not this metaphor was pertinent to scriptwriters Billy Bob Thornton and Tom Epperson, in black director Carl Franklin's hands, *One False Move* is set on tracing American race conflict back to its seed bed in the South.

A hybrid of a road movie and a *High Noon*-style portrait of a fragile would-be hero, the film transcends the usual low-budget thriller concerns via an intricate script which emphasises the racial theme through a number of black/white relationships: the mixed race Fantasia/Lila and her two white lovers Ray and Dale, Ray's partnership in crime with Pluto, and the LA cop team of Cole and McFeely.

It's unusual enough to find these concerns in a genre thriller, but their use in one modelled on the hard-boiled

fiction of writers like Jim Thompson and Charles Williams borders on the audacious. Recent films in the genre by Dennis Hopper (*The Hot Spot*) and James Foley (*After Dark My Sweet*) emphasised sickly humour at the expense of the fiction's characteristically overheated psychodrama. Truer to the genre's icy characterisations, the cocaine paranoid Ray and the impassive Pluto, with his IQ of 180 and his pleasure in using a knife, make a suitably Thompsonian pair. Franklin's interest in the road movie element lies more in teasing out the tensions that a plausible interracial gang would signify than in playing his heavies for grim laughs.

While Ray and Pluto argue about what to do, Fantasia is the film's quiet agent of change and discovery – not for herself (it is she who is literally returning to an identity she cannot escape) but for her son and his white father. Her adopted name, coupled with her apparent passivity, might lead one to suspect she is merely a projection of white male fantasy, but her actions belie this. She saves the dealer's child, shoots the traffic cop, and steals the money for her son – virtually all the decisive moves undertaken on the road. Nevertheless her dreamy, listless persona and her active duplicity still fit her for the role of femme fatale, and it is on her image that the whole film

turns. What distinguishes her from a *noir* archetype is that she is given psychological cause for her enigmatic behaviour.

Before the arrival of Fantasia's photo – the moment when she 'becomes' Lila – Dale Hawkins is an excitable child-like good ol' boy in awe of the big city cops. As his wife tartly says while apologising to Cole for his use of the word "nigger" in front of black cop McFeely, "Dale watches TV, I read non-fiction." His bravado is just part of his Southern Cowboy charm, as casually employed as it presumably was in bedding Lila. But on seeing her picture straight after suffering his colleagues' ridicule, the reality of a personal connection arrives with too abrupt a force. The transformation from buffoon to tragic figure (from adolescent to man) is more than actor Bill Paxton can handle, and it surely should have been managed by degrees.

In turning the film so radically on one moment, Franklin may have robbed himself of a plausible psychology for Hawkins, but he has an alternative protagonist, beautifully played by Cynda Williams (*Mo' Better Blues*), and all along he invests more in Fantasia/Lila's subtextual sacrificial journey than the one Hawkins makes from his daughter's cradle to his son's side.

Nick James



Subtextual sacrifice: Cynda Williams

Oxen (The Ox)

Sweden 1992

Director: Sven Nykvist

Certificate	Cast
12	Stellan Skarsgård
Distributor	Helge
Artificial Eye	Ewa Fröling
Production Company	Elfrida
Sweetland Films	Lennart Hjelström
In association with	Svenning
Sandrews/Swedish Film	Max Von Sydow
Institute/Swedish	The Pastor
Television/Channel 1/	Liv Ullman
Nordisk Film	Maria
Production AS/Nordic	Björn Granath
Film & Television Fund	Flyckt
Producer	Erlend Josephson
Jean Doumanian	Silver
Line Producer	Rikard Wolff
Joseph Stillman	Johannes
Production Manager	Helge Jordal
Lars Blomgren	Navy
Screenplay	Agneta Prytz
Sven Nykvist	The Old Woman
Lasse Summanen	Björn Gustafson
Director of Photography	Officer in Command
Dan Myhrman	Ingal Safra
Editor	Shop Owner
Lasse Summanen	
Art Director	8,299 feet
Peter Holmark	92 minutes
Set Decorator	
Magnus Magnusson	
Music Extracts	Subtitles
"Solveig's Song", "The	
Missing Ox", "Death	
of Asa", "Svenning's	
Visit", "In the Cradle",	
"Discovered", "Melody,	
Op.63 2", "Prelude,	
Op.40, 1" by Edward	
Grieg; "Hymnal";	
"Wir glauben all"	
by J.S. Bach; "Prayer	
at the Table"; "Navvies'	
Song"; "Market	
Accordian"; "Navvies'	
Lullaby"; "Country	
Dance"; "Sonata 1975"	
by Lubos Fisor	
Music Supervisor	
Thomas S. Drescher	
Costume Design	
Inger Pehrsson	
Make-up	
Kaj Gronberg	
Sound Recordist	
Bo Persson	

Rural Sweden, Christmas 1868. Frantic at the hungry cries of his baby daughter Anna, Helge Roos slaughters an ox belonging to his employer, Svenning Gustavsson. His wife Elfrida is horrified, but Helge tells her the meat will allow them to survive the harsh winter. The disappearance of the ox hampers farm work, but apart from Flyckt, a drunken poacher with designs on Elfrida, no one suspects Helge of being responsible.

When only the ox's hide is left, Helge takes it to sell at Jönköping market. En route he meets the Pastor, and wracked with guilt, confesses his crime. The Pastor escorts him to court, assuring him he will be dealt with leniently, but instead Helge is sentenced to be flogged and imprisoned for life. Elfrida and her daughter are left destitute. She repels Flyckt's advances, but later in desperation accepts food from a railway worker in return for sex. From this liaison she bears a son. Meanwhile Helge, in jail, is persecuted by his fellow-prisoners who take him for a stool-pigeon. A further torment is the arrival of Flyckt, jailed for sexual offences, who boasts of having been Elfrida's lover.

◀ The Pastor, pressing to have Helge's sentence reduced, organises a petition which everyone signs except the implacable Gustavsson. Only after five years is he induced to relent, and Helge is set free. He comes home to a passionate reunion with Elfrida, but on seeing her bastard son leaves again in fury, planning to emigrate to America. The Pastor persuades him that he should forgive his wife since she, like Helge himself, acted out of desperation for the sake of their daughter. Helge returns to Elfrida and is reconciled.

Sven Nykvist's first film as solo director takes on unfashionable concerns: marital fidelity, social duty, sin and expiation. Though Nykvist predictably names Ingmar Bergman (whose regular cinematographer he was from 1960 onwards) as chief influence on his style of film-making, the moral universe of his film has little in common with that of his mentor. The near-feudal world he portrays may be bleak and harsh, but there's none of Bergman's tormented vision of mankind shouting its questions at an empty heaven. In *The Ox*, moral ambiguity scarcely figures: right and wrong are as clearly demarcated as the congregation in the local church, where the aisle segregates women from men.

So even though Helge kills the ox for the most excusable of reasons – to feed his starving child – he doesn't dissent from Elfrida's verdict that "We've sinned before God, we've broken the law and we've wronged Svenning, the man we work for". As they dismember the carcass, distant church-bells sound as if in reproach. Guilt-ridden, Helge readily accepts retribution: the injustice is not that he's punished, but that the punishment is disproportionate to his crime. Through his suffering, he atones for his sin – during his flogging there's a brief cut to the head of the felled ox, linking his agony with that of the animal – and in forgiving Elfrida, shows himself worthy of the forgiveness he's been granted.

What saves the film, for all its Old Testament moral framework, from turning into a conventional exercise in

Nordic gloom is its celebration of the resilience of human emotion. The love between Helge and Elfrida is strengthened by adversity to the point where not even the revelation of her infidelity can destroy it, and the impersonal severity of the law – the judge who passes sentence features only as a grim off-screen presence, never seen – can be worn down by the persistence of mercy. Even the stern absolutes of religion prove flexible: von Sydow's Pastor is a far less troubled and more compassionate figure than any Bergman clergyman (both Bergman and Nykvist, it's worth noting, are the sons of Lutheran pastors).

Where *The Ox* does recall Nykvist's work with Bergman is in its visual treatment – again, hardly surprising, since the two men worked so closely together that it is often hard to tell who was influencing whom. Acting as his own director of photography, and shooting interiors and exteriors alike on real locations, Nykvist puts natural (or natural-seeming) light to iconographic use. Early scenes in the couple's hut are keyed in dark reds and browns, suggesting the warmth of their relationship despite poverty. After their separation the tones darken to heavy greys and blacks, while the prison quarry – a precipitous, perpetually frozen slope, like the lowest circle of Dante's *Inferno* – is grey on grey, utter desolation. And as Helge is freed the film also emerges from darkness, with a joyous sense of release, into the luminous fresh green of a spring landscape.

In keeping with the tenor of his story, Nykvist frames his images with archetypal simplicity, setting them against the yearning clarity of Grieg's music. Only the very last shot introduces a hint of ambiguity. We see the embrace of reconciliation, not directly but reflected in a window through which the two children are peering, their faces puzzled and faintly apprehensive. A voice-over tells us, with quiet irony, that the couple had eight children and that "all behaved very well".

Philip Kemp

Paris Is Burning

USA 1990

Director: Jennie Livingston

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

ICA

Production Company

Off White Productions

With financial assistance from

National Endowment

for the Arts/Jerome

Foundation/New York

State Council on the

Arts/New York

Foundation for the

Arts/Paul Robeson

Fund/Edelman Fund/

Art Matters Inc/

BBC Television

Executive Producers

Davis Lacy

Nigel Finch

Producer

Jennie Livingston

Co-producer

Barry Swimer

Associate Producers

Claire Goodman

Meg McLagan

Additional:

Richard Dooley

Production Co-ordinator

Elise Pettus

Production Manager

Natalie Hill

Director of Photography

Paul Gibson

In colour

Camera Operators

2nd Unit:

Mayrse Alberti

Additional:

William Megalos

Frank Prinzi

Alyson Denny

Ben Speth

Graphic Design

Jim Rogala

Anne Dutlinger

Editors

Jonathan Oppenheim

Additional:

Kate Davis

Associate Editor

Carol Hillson

Music Extract

"Triumphal March"

by Giuseppe Verdi,

performed by

H. J. Walther and the

Festival Symphony

Orchestra

Songs

"Silent Morning" by

and performed by Noel

Pagan; "Who's Zoomin'

Who" by Narada

Michael Walden,

performed by Aretha

Franklin; "Love is the

Message" by Kenneth

Gamble, Leon Huff,

performed by MFSB;

"Love Hangover" by

Pam Sawyer, Marilyn

McLeod, performed

by Diana Ross; "Move

Your Body" by and

performed by Marshall

Jefferson; "Let No Man

Put Asunder" by Bruce

Gray, Bruce Hawes,

performed by First

Choice; "Got To Be

Real" by David Foster,

Cheryl Lynn, David

Paich, performed by

Cheryl Lynn; "The

Show" by R. Walters,

D. Davis, performed

by Doug E. Fresh and

The Get Fresh Crew;

"Love's Theme" by and

performed by Barry

White; "Sundance" by

and performed by

Kitaro; "Never Never

Gonna Give You Up"

by Barry White,

performed by Love

Unlimited Orchestra;

"Sweet Dreams

(Are Made of This)"

by Annie Lennox,

David A. Stewart,

performed by

Eurythmics; "Is It

All Over My Face?" by

Arthur Russell, Steve

D'Aquisto, performed

by Loose Joints; "I'll

House You" by P. Hall,

M. Smalls, S. Burwell,

performed by Jungle

Brothers; "I Am What

I Am" by Jerry Herman,

performed by Carmen

and Brooke; "Deep in

Vogue" by Malcolm

McLaren, David Lebov,

performed by Malcolm

McLaren and the

Boyz n the Bunch;

"Another Man is

Beating My Time"

by Butch Ingram,

performed by Barbara

Mason; "Over the

Rainbow" by E. Y.

Harburg, H. Arlen,

performed by

Patti LaBelle

Titles

Borden Elriff

Opticals

Eastern Optical EFX

inc Cynosure

Sound Editor

Stacia Thompson

Sound Recordists

Catherine Calderon

Judy Karp

Additional:

Etienne Sauret

George Leong

J.T. Takagi

Scott Breindel

Stanley Nelson

James Adner

Mayrse Alberti

Jennie Livingston

Sound Re-recordists

Matt Skilton

Rick Dior

Sound Transfers

Sound One

Cast

Carmen and Brooke

Andre Christian

Dorian Corey

Paris Dupree

Pepper LaBeija

Junior LaBeija

Willi Ninja

Sandy Ninja

Kim Ponderia

Freddie Ponderia

Sol Ponderia

Arto Ponderia

Octavia Saint Laurent

Stevie Saint Laurent

Angie Xtravaganza

Blanca Xtravaganza

Donny Xtravaganza

David Xtravaganza

David Ian Xtravaganza

David, The Father

Xtravaganza

Venus Xtravaganza

And all of the legendary

children and upcoming

legends

7,020 feet

75 minutes

New York, 1987. On a hot summer's night, two teenage boys stand outside a small Harlem community hall, watching young men bustle inside. It's ball night and the men – all gay blacks – are preparing to 'walk the ball' in the hope of winning a trophy. Like the regular beauty contests that these drag balls are modelled on, this is a fiercely competitive affair. The contestants are all members of 'Houses', small gay gangs with names like Ninja, Xtravaganza, Labelja and Pendavis. The house members ('children') compete for the glory of their house, entering or 'walking' in categories that range from the traditional – evening wear, sports wear and town and country – to the more idiosyncratic – Butch Queen First Time In Drag, Wall Street Executive, Bangee (neighborhood thug/drug dealer) Boy. Striking catwalk poses in 'voguing', they strive for 'realness' – that is, the quality of passing for something they're not.

We move from the ball to the apartments of veteran voguers Dorian Corey, Pepper Labelja and Angie Xtravaganza, who provide a history of the ball scene. Younger members like Venus Xtravaganza, Octavia Saint Laurent, Kim Pendavis, Carmen and Brooke provide insights into further categories of realness, and talk about their lives and their hopes for the future. Venus, a petite blonde halfway through a sex change, longs for a husband, children and enough money to remove the "little secret" between his/her legs. Octavia is observed window-shopping at haute couture stores. Willi Ninja, a champion vogue dancer, is seen giving deportment lessons to (real) girls. 1989: the voguing scene has come overground; white, moneyed visitors from the real fashion world drop in on a benefit ball. The two teenage boys, whom we now know to be lovers, bid us goodbye. A postscript reveals that Venus was murdered soon after filming ended.

When Jennie Livingston's documentary about Harlem's gay ball scene opened as a 58-minute video at New York's New Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film in 1990, it was instantly recognised as a masterpiece of under-world reportage. And not just within the gay culture. Bounced up from 16mm form, with added credits, a flash-card guide to the ball vocabulary and a killer soundtrack of disco hits, the film scooped the kind of awards that its voguing heroes would die for. At New York's Film Forum, it ran for a record-breaking 17 weeks in 1991. In Britain too, where a truncated version was screened on BBC TV's Arena in 1990, it provoked strong reactions and high ratings.

This is a satisfying success. The release of Livingston's film was roughly contemporary with the discovery of the underground ball scene by the pop world, as commemorated on records like Madonna's 'Vogue' and Malcolm McLaren's 'Deep In Vogue'. Although the latter actually used ball world personnel – Willi Ninja featured in



Bovine retribution: Ewa Froling, Stellan Skarsgård



Luscious bodies: Dorian Corey, Pepper LaBeija

McLaren's video and was flown all over the world to promote the record - it was obvious that both stars were only temporary sojourners on a souvenir hunt. Livingston makes it quite clear that the world of *Paris* is one filled with complex messages that require a more careful analysis than pop appropriation can provide.

The business of decoding these messages and locating the issues at play makes for the film's enduring fascination. If this were just another film about cross-dressing men, it would at best be camp, at worst a piece of material for trainee psychiatrists. But it's not. With their houses and their language, the ball queens have responded to economic and social exclusion by creating a community that's fabulous in every sense of the word. In real terms, the ball queens have so much of nothing it defies imagination. Their life stories are a litany of poverty, parental rejection, homelessness. One queen dreams of looking "as well as a white person", others want to be women, a few want to be mothers and live in the country. Once you accept that their commonality lies in the refuge of fantasy, then anything goes. "O-P-U-L-E-N-C-E!" sings out one ball queen. "You own everything! Everything is yours!"

And indeed, much of what these self-scripted starlets say is immensely funny. Their specialised vocabulary (which would put *Wayne's World* to shame) commands special attention. Kim Pendavis explains 'mopping' (stealing a dress); Willi is an expert in 'reading' and 'throwing shade' on the dance floor - that is, copying someone's moves and criticising them. All the 'children' long to be 'legendary' and all strive for the elusive quality of 'realness'. Realness certainly has to do with passing oneself off as the perfect mannequin, in the guise of executive, playboy or hoodlum; but not far beneath its surface lies a combination of mockery and the desire for

acceptance by affluent society. Most importantly, realness is about survival in a homophobic world. "When [a queen] can go out in sunlight, still have her clothes on and get home with no blood, then that femme queen is real".

Livingston's method of weaving the ball, street and interview footage into a coherent and flowing whole is audaciously simple. Some 20 phrases flashed up on screen - Bangee! Luscious Body! Pig Latin! - announce the film's editorial structure. Each phrase is defined, elaborated and activated in ensuing shots. The careful segues between sections establish a fluid momentum in which very little intervention is necessary; Livingston never appears as interlocutor although her presence is very much felt through her choice of material. Livingston, on record as a lesbian of German Jewish extraction, finds in the ball scene men marginalised through race and sexuality. Her implicit message - one which should be heard by us all - is that the benefits of community are underlined by its role as protection against outside threats. Short of the ritualised combats of the ball-walking scenes, violence is off-screen, out there and completely real. The ball queens inhabit a dangerous world.

If the wit, glamour and mind-boggling outfits of *Paris Is Burning* are disarming, not far beneath the film's surface is an immensely moving quality. Watching the sublimely elegant Willi teaching a class of slouchy (real) girls a feminine deportment is hilarious, but the outside world intrudes in a more insidious way. Venus' death (presumably at the hands of a client who discovered her secret) is bad enough; but realising that no amount of ballroom realness can get these voguing 'executives' off the Harlem catwalks and onto Wall Street itself is quietly heart-breaking.

Louise Gray

Romper Stomper

Australia 1992

Director: Geoffrey Wright

Certificates

Distributor
Medusa Pictures
Production Company
Romper Stomper production for Seon Films
In association with The Australian Film Commission

Producers

Daniel Scharf
Ian Pringle
Associate Producer
Phil Jones
Production Co-ordinator
Fiona Egger
Production Manager
Elisa Argenzio
Location Unit Manager
Stephen Brett
Casting
Liz Mullinar
Consultants
Greg Apps
Assistant Directors
Chris Odgers
Monica Pearce
Andrew Power

Screenplay

Geoffrey Wright
Director of Photography
Ron Hagen

Colour

Eastman Color

Opticals

Colin Tyler

Editor

Bill Murphy

Production Designer

Steven Jones-Evans

Set Decorators

Lisa Thompson

Special Effects

Film Trix

Music

John Clifford White

Music Extract

"Au Fond du Temple

Saint" from "Les

Pêcheurs de perles"

by Georges Bizet,

performed by Ernest

Blanc, Nicolai Gedda,

Orchestre du Théâtre

National de l'Opéra

Comique

Music performed by

Vocals:

John Clifford White

Guitar:

John Hewitt

Bass Guitar:

Chris Pettifer

Drums:

Phillip Beard

German Vocals:

Peter Pales

Orchestrations

John Hawker

Music Editor

Peter Palanky

Costume Designer

Anna Borghesi

Make-up Artists

Christine Miller

Sue Kelly Tait

Title Design

Oliver Streotton

Sound Design

Frank Lipson

Sound Editors

Steve Burgess

Roger Savage

ADR Editor

Peter Burgess

Sound Recordist

David Lee

Dolby stereo consultant:

Stephen Murphy

Sound Transfers

Eugene Wilson

Foley

Steve Burgess

Gerry Long

Sound Co-ordinator

Chris Peters

Stunts

Russell Allen
Brett Anderson
Lance Anderson
Szumai Anderson
Graham Collis
Dean Gould
John Raaen
Anthea Roordink
Reg Roordink
Steve Roper
Ron Sheepers

Cast

Russell Crowe
Hando
Daniel Pollock
Davey
Jacqueline McKenzie
Gabe
Alex Scott
Martin
Leigh Russell
Sonny Jim
Daniel Wyllie
Cackles
James McKenna
Bubs
Eric Meach
Champ
Frank Magroo
Brett
Christopher McLennan
Luke
Josephine Koon
Megan
Samantha Bladen
Tracy
Tony Lee
Tiger
John Brumpton
Magoo
Don Bridges
Harold
Janel Anderson
Jacqui
Stephen Hall
Fico
Tri Phan
Nguyen
Thuan Lo
Nguyen's Eldest Son
Mink Lo
Middle Son
Thach Lo
Youngest Son
Craig Mercer
Chris
Angus Cummings
Rob
Yvonne Lawrence
Davey's Grandmother
Edwina Exton
Skinhead Girl
David Trudinnich
Gabe's Boyfriend
Steve Millchamp
Pammy Bill
William H. Halliwell
Dento
Vo Lo
Tiger's Mate
Vo Nguyen
Francy
Paul Nguyen
Long
Thanh Trinh
Vinh
Vy Nguyen
Tiger's Sister
Ann Morell
Barmaid
Holl Foley
Skinhead in Plaster
Wigel Baptist
Strangled Man
Jenny Lin
Kitchen Hand
John Raaen
Plain Clothes Policeman
Anthea Roordink
Policewoman
Russell Frost
Young Policeman
Keith Clarke
Ria Yazaki
Girls on Cliff Top

3,324 feet

91 minutes

Footscray Station, Melbourne.

Three Vietnamese teenagers are viciously assaulted by racist skinhead thugs led by Hando and his right-hand man Davey. Gabe, a young woman who's just broken up with her latest boyfriend, comes across the gang and tags along with Hando, who steals a jacket for her from a shop window. Back at their rundown hideout she has sex with him in a bedroom adorned with Nazi regalia.

The next day sees the arrival of Magoo, a skinhead from Canberra, who sells Davey a Hitler Youth issue knife and celebrates the occasion with a slam-dancing party. Hando explains his theories on racial supremacy to Gabe, quoting *Mein Kampf* and putting the words into action by attacking the Vietnamese family who've bought the local pub. The Asian community swiftly rallies to the family's aid, starting a bloody running battle through the streets and tracking the skinheads back to their hideout, which they destroy. Hando, Davey, Gabe and the others escape via the roof, repairing to an abandoned warehouse to plot their revenge. Gabe leads them to the house of her rich film director father, where they can round up stolen goods and she can humiliate her father after years of incest. But her father scares the gang off with a handgun, and Gabe accuses Hando of being a loser. She storms out, followed by Davey, with whom she's been forming an emotional bond. Informing the police, who raid the warehouse and arrest most of the gang, she later joins Davey at his German grandmother's house, where they make love.

The next morning, Hando appears with news of the police bust, maintaining that the three of them should stick together. Later, after he has strangled an Asian shop assistant during a robbery, they drive west in a stolen car, ending up on a beach where the tensions between them finally erupt. Overhearing Hando encouraging his pal to leave her behind, Gabe sets the get-away car alight and as the two men tussle, Davey fatally stabs Hando with the Hitler Youth knife. Davey and Gabe remain together in an embrace.

Former film critic Geoffrey Wright's debut feature has already garnered both brickbats and acclaim on home ground and on the festival circuit, splitting opinion between those who admire the courage of the film's head-on approach to a tough subject, and others who find the apparent lack of moral judgement quite irresponsible. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals a welter of thematic and stylistic incoherence that virtually precludes a cut-and-dried response in one direction or the other. In fact, *Romper Stomper* is neither a morally blank analysis of far right misdemeanours, nor a wholly traditional and liberally balanced social problem picture, and that is precisely what makes it so problematic.

Certainly no model of distanced neutrality, Wright's film clearly ►



These boots weren't made for walking: Russell Crowe (centre)

◀ expounds the notion, for instance, that the skinheads' ideological stance is a direct response from a white youth underclass to the burgeoning economic sway of the Vietnamese immigrant community. Hando plainly affirms that he doesn't want to be "a white coolie in my own country" or go "the same way as the fucking Abbo", before turning to the notion of "racial blood poisoning" in the pages of *Mein Kampf*. A slam-dancing party sequence, where Wright intercuts from the mayhem on the floor to Hando and Gabe having rough sex and again to Davey pummelling a punchbag, serves to underline the thesis that the gang's violent behaviour is, in part, a pleasurable outlet for physical frustrations, while Davey's use of a Hitler Youth issue knife to fatally dispatch Hando in the final reel is an obvious injection of symbolism to ram home the notion that violence breeds only more violence.

On paper at least, all of this seems reasonable enough, but in his treatment of the character details, Wright veers uncomfortably from such sober analysis towards a sympathetic understanding, and in so doing comes close (unintentionally?) to endorsing the gang's aberrant activity. In the scene where Gabe turns the tables on her incestuous father by tying him up while the gang ransacks his place, it's impossible not to root for her and to feel that the violence she's picked up on from the gang has helped to liberate her from her psychological shadows. Conveniently wheeling on a German grandmother and an absent father for Davey, Wright seems to propose that we consider his and Gabe's record of destruction in the light of such mitigating circumstances; and although he never indicates the degree to which this should excuse them, the fact that their capacity for love and affection sees them finally spared to face an uncertain future obviously points to the way we should marshal our sympathies.

In the case of resolute fascist zealot Hando, on the other hand, we are given far less background information on which to base a similar judgement. We learn that he's concerned about the Vietnamese gaining the ascendancy in the local area of Melbourne, but for

the most part Russell Crowe's committed and highly threatening performance has to make the role seem better developed than it actually is. In a film about neo-Nazis, we do need to know more about the skinheads' ringleader, but by leaving his psychological make-up undercharacterised and offering no counter to his racist propagandising, Wright lets him off the hook much too easily. If all he amounts to is a psychotic monster, this makes for a pretty lame piece of writing on which to build a purportedly serious look at the appeal of the contemporary far right.

Wright's formal approach muddies the issues yet further. John McNaughton's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* has shown that a degree-zero filmic style can distance an audience from events on screen and so fruitfully allow them to question their responses; but here, with sharp cutting in music-video style, a camera sweeping mercurially through the action and forceful Oi songs pumping away on the soundtrack, Wright has chosen to shoot the thuggery in as viscerally provocative a style as possible. One supposes that the intention in forcing such a pronounced response is to make us question it, but by delivering the thrills which *Henry* does not, Wright seems to offer a vicarious enjoyment to parallel the buzz the characters get from kicking heads in.

Romper Stomper is much too downbeat to merit accusations of glorifying these bully boys or the brutality they perpetrate – they do come out firmly on the losing side, after all – but, even though trying to second-guess audience response is one of the most specious of critical activities, such moments do give cause for concern. To Wright's credit, he later throws in a scene (the rumpus at Gabe's father's house is artfully underlaid with the big tenor duet from Bizet's *Pearl Fishers*) which, by way of comparison, comments on the way in which music and montage combine to seductively aestheticise screen violence. But it's a point which will probably pass by those whose skills in reading a film operate at a less sophisticated level, precisely those who might most profit from picking up on it.

Trevor Johnston

Shadows and Fog

USA 1991

Director: Woody Allen

Certificate

15

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Orion Pictures

Executive Producers

Jack Rollins

Charles Joffe

Producer

Robert Greenhut

Co-producers

Helen Robin

Joseph Hartwick

Associate Producer

Thomas Reilly

Production Co-ordinator

Helen Robin

Production Manager

Joseph Hartwick

Location Manager

James A. Davis

Costing

Juliet Taylor

Assistant Directors

Thomas Reilly

Richard Patrick

Screenplay

Woody Allen

Director of Photography

Carlo Di Palma

Black and white

Camera Operator

Dick Mingalone

Optical Effects Supervisors

Balsmeyer & Everett

Editor

Susan E. Morse

Production Designer

Santo Loquasto

Art Director

Speed Hopkins

Set Decorators

George DeFitta Jr

Amy Marshall

Set Dresser

Dave Weinman

Scenic Artists

James Sorice

Cosmo Sorice

Songs

"The Cannon Song From

Little Threepenny

Music" by Kurt Weill,

performed by Canadian

Chamber Ensemble:

"The Cannon Song From

Little Threepenny

Music" by Kurt Weill,

performed by The

London Sinfonietta:

"When Day is Done"

by Robert Katscher;

B. G. DeSilva, "Ja, Ja,

Die Frau'n Sind Meine

Schwache Seite" by

K. Schwebach, A. Egen,

"When the White Lilacs

Bloom Again" by Franz

Doelle, Fritz Roiter,

performed by The Jack

Hyllton Orchestra:

"Prologue From the

Seven Deadly Sins" by

Kurt Weill, Bertold

Brecht; "Alabama Song"

by Kurt Weill, Bertold

Brecht, performed by

Marek Weber and His

Orchestra; "Moritat

From the Threepenny

Opera" by Kurt Weill,

Bertold Brecht,

performed by Berlin

Staatsoper

Costume Design

Jeffrey Kurland

Wardrobe

Bili Christians

Patricia Eiben

Makeup

Bernadette Mazur

Titles/Options

The Effects House

Sound Design Consultant

Don Sable

Supervising Sound Editor

Bob Hein

Foley Editor

Lori Kornspun

Sound Recordists

James Sabat

Frank Graziadei

Dubbing:

Kerry Kelly

Harry Higgins

Sound Re-recordist

Lee Dichter

Foley Artists

Elisha Birnbaum

Brian Vancho

Cast

Woody Allen

Kleinman

Kathy Bates

Jodie Foster

Ana Lango

Lily Tomlin

Prostitutes

John Canach

Student Jack

Mia Farrow

Irmy

Fred Ouyang

Robert Silver

Hacker's Followers

Julie Kanner

Alma

Madonna

Marie

John Malkovich

Clown

Kenneth Mars

Magician

Kate Holligan

Eve

Donald Pleasence

Doctor

Philip Bosco

Mr Paulsen

Robert Joy

Spiro's Assistant

Wallace Shawn

Simon Carr

Kurtwood Smith

Vogel's Follower

Joel Sommer

Priest

David Ogden Stiers

Hacker

Michael Kirby

Killer

James Rebhorn

Victor Argo

Daniel Von Bogen

Vigilantes

Camille Savoca

Landlady

Tim Loomis

Dwarf

Katy Diarrum

Fat Lady

Dennis Voetsels

Strongman

Andrew Mark Berman

Paul Anthony Stewart

Thomas Holzer

Students

Fred McLeod

Undesirables Onlooker

Greg Stehner

Police Chief

Peter Appel

John C. Reilly

Brian Senior

Michael P. Troy

Remah Ramsey

Ron Turak

Cops at Police Station

Peter McRobbie

Bartender

Ira Wheeler

Cop with Priest

Ezzor Ballin

Woman with Baby

Rebecca Gibson

Baby

Charles Cragin

Spiro

W. H. Macy

Cop with Spiro

Tom Rits Farrell

Ron Weyand

Vigilantes with Spiro

Richard Riehl

Max Robinson

Roustabouts

7,694 feet

85 minutes

The 1920s. An unnamed port town is under curfew as a ruthless murderer is on the loose. One foggy night he claims another victim by his usual method of strangulation. Kleinman, a lowly local, is roused from his slumbers by a vigilante group who demand he join them in their search for the killer. Meanwhile the circus has arrived in town. Irmy, the sword-swallower, and her boyfriend the Clown argue about marriage and children. Later Irmy, discovering the Clown in flagrante delicto with Marie the seductive high-wire artist, decides to pack her bags and leave.

On the other side of town, Kleinman visits the Doctor, who is carrying out autopsies on the murderer's victims, to find out if he is in on the vigilantes' plan. After wandering the streets, Irmy is offered shelter at the local bordello, where the prostitutes are entertaining a group of young students. One of them, Jack, takes a shine to Irmy and offers her \$700 to sleep with them; she reluctantly agrees. Kleinman takes leave of the Doctor, who is later confronted and murdered by the Killer. Various "socially undesirable" families are rounded up. The Doctor's body is discovered. Kleinman is taken in for questioning by the police. The bordello is raided and Irmy is brought into the police station.

When Kleinman and Irmy are released, he takes her under his wing. Kleinman apprehends someone he believes to be the killer, but he turns out to be his boss, Mr Paulsen, from whom he is waiting to hear about a promotion. Meanwhile the Clown goes drinking in a bar and meets Jack; the Clown learns that Jack has slept with Irmy. Irmy decides that she wants to donate her money to the church and asks Kleinman to take it in. Outside the church she meets a destitute mother and child and asks Kleinman to retrieve the money to give to the woman instead. Kleinman is then involved in a dispute between various vigilante groups. Spiro, a clairvoyant, arrives and reveals that Kleinman is hiding stolen evidence that links him to the killings. The mob sets upon him but he escapes. He goes to visit Alma, the ex-fiancee he once jilted, but she throws him out, saying she never wants to see him again.

Meanwhile Irmy bumps into the Clown and they discover the body of the mother Irmy met earlier. The child is still alive and they take her in. Kleinman finds refuge at the bordello, but the mob catches up with him there and he is chased into the night. He bumps into Simon Carr, a work colleague, and learns that he has been sacked. On the run, Kleinman eventually ends up at the circus, where the Killer also appears. Kleinman and the circus Magician try to outwit the Killer, and catch him with the aid of a mirror, but he disappears. The Magician offers the destitute Kleinman, who has in the past taken an amateur interest in the magic arts, a job at the circus, which he accepts. The Magician makes them both disappear.

Eclipsed by the headline fuss over *Husbands and Wives*, *Shadows and Fog* comes into circulation in Britain out of step with the rest of Allen's oeuvre, like a lesser, odd-ball sibling with no claim to scandalous fame. Chronologically, it comes after *Alice* and is best read as a follow-on to that film in which a would-be Manhattan socialite, steps through the looking-glass world of her city and, aided by 'drink me' magic potions, finds a truer reflection of herself. In *Alice*, Allen dealt with the mythic realms of the imagination in which invisibility and flying are quite credible – remember the scene in which, encumbered with children, Alice visits the circus on her illicit tryst with the saxophonist Joe. Everyone needs variety in their lives to provide a vision of the possible.

In *Shadows and Fog*, that variety takes over wholesale as Allen leads his audience into a black and white Expressionist wonderland that could be the setting for Lang's *M* or for that matter, E. A. Dupont's *Variety* (not forgetting Bergman's *Sawdust and Tinsel*). The film has the disjointed logic of a mid-winter nightmare shot by Karl Freund with Kurt Weill providing the score (a crisp pastiche of Freund, courtesy of Carlo de Palma, authentic Weill), with the starlight-garlanded circus installed on the edge of town like some magical outpost.

At the centre of all this is Kleinman, the quintessential 'little man' and another 'K', who wakes up out of a stupor to embark on the most troubling trials. As Kleinman, Allen is in *schlemihl* overdrive, playing up to the klutzy neurotic persona of his early films – memorably dubbed "the funny ones" in *Starlight Memories* – but here he finds himself locked into far darker concerns. Most obviously the style and menacing mood of *Shadows and Fog* (the title just a shade away from Resnais' Auschwitz documentary *Nuit et Brouillard*) point to the Weimar years. But littered with thumping clues, the analogy is almost trite: the Doctor performs his autopsies on the murdered bodies, as though in the very act of probing them he will accomplish his mission "to discover where insanity stops and evil begins". "Socially undesirable" families are rounded up and there is much snatched chatter about a master plan – complete with mention

of a "zero hour" – in which Kleinman is unsure as to what role he plays; later he is told by Simon Carr that he is "more suited to extermination than life on the planet."

These are the most clichéd conspiratorial rustlings to which Allen introduces a typically playful paranoid panic. When Kleinman presents the two henchman-like priests at the church with Irmy's bordello benefits, they magnanimously erase his name from a mysterious list that they are compiling. When he then goes back to retrieve the money they reinstate him, but this time sinisterly circle his name. But if Kleinman is dogged by fears of persecution, he is hounded also by guilty feelings – why else would an innocent man steal a wine glass that makes him party to the crime? Kleinman's innocence, however, is in itself an illusion. It transpires that he is indeed culpable of a most heinous misdemeanour – he was discovered in flagrante delicto with his fiancée's sister on their wedding day. The guilt for this very real emotional killing finds itself displaced onto the more phantasmagorical level of the murders (the wine glass takes on a particular significance given its symbolic junction in Jewish wedding ceremonies). It is text-book stuff – the analyst's dream dream.

And in such a dream, what better *doppelgänger* for Kleinman/Allen than the Clown, the artist whose greatest fear is of "attempting to make people laugh and failing"? It is a kind of terrifying impotence, allusions to which are made clear when the Clown finds out – through his strange meeting with Jack – that Irmy is certainly not amused, either in the comic or the sexual sense. Meanwhile Kleinman, a man who proves to be powerless against the state, experiences a similar trauma when bedded by one of the prostitutes at the whorehouse, or horror house as it is accidentally called at one point (there is more to trip over than the high wire here). Indeed, the parallel between the circus, with all its freaky side-shows, and the bordello is conspicuously elaborated upon. "I'm a sword-swallower," Irmy innocently declares amongst the prostitutes, only to be met by the lewd riposte, "That's my speciality too." These are two arenas where crazy fantasies can be played out for a small fee; cinema is a third. If *Shadows and Fog* resurrects a movie past like an old canvas, Allen projects onto it another fear of impotence – the anxieties of a director who feels annihilated by his cinematic forefathers' longer shadows. Kleinman is the amateur magician who, when finally asked to join the circle, finds himself vanished into thin air by his new-found mentor. Peering through the *Shadows and Fog*, we get the sense that Allen feels similarly diminished by those he conjures up. "They need illusions like they need the air," declares the Magician in his final act. This restless, almost hallucinogenic film suggests a director suffocated by his art.

Lizzie Francke

The Silent Touch

United Kingdom/Poland/Denmark 1992

Director: Krzysztof Zanussi

Certificate

15

Distributor

Mayfair Entertainment

Production Companies

Mark Forstater

Productions (London)/

Tor Film Group

(Warsaw)/Metronome

Productions (Lyngby)

With the participation

of British Screen/

The European

Co-production Fund

(UK)/The Danish Film

Institute/Sandrews

Film & Theatre AB/The

Swedish Film Institute

Executive Producer

Tor:

Ryszard Straszewski

Producer

Mark Forstater

Co-producers

Mads Egmont

Christensen

Krzysztof Zanussi

Associate Producers

Raymond Day

Michał Szczerbic

Production Co-ordinators

Jan Janik

Maggie Kosowicz

Production Manager

Vibeke Windelow

Location Managers

Grazyna Kozłowska

Karin Trolle

Casting

Tracey Seaward

Assistant Directors

Marek Brodzki

Magdalena Szwarcbart

Krzysztof Maj

Marianne Moritzen

Screenplay

Peter Morgan

Mark Wadlow

Story

Krzysztof Zanussi

Edward Zebrowski

Director of Photography

Jaroslav Zamojda

Editor

Marek Denys

Production Designer

Ewa Braun

Music

Wojciech Kilar

Music Extracts

"Song" by Claude

Debussy, Paul Bourget,

performed by K.

Mierzejewska; "Boiero"

by Maurice Ravel;

"Klasyczny W Dlonie"

by Mikolaj Gomolka;

"Sonata for 4 Hands";

"Sonata for Violins and

Piano" by Wolfgang

Amadeus Mozart;

"Progress II" by The

Team 'Armia'; "Japan"

by Tomasz 'Kciuk'

Jaworski; "Exodus"

by Wojciech Kilar

performed by WOSPRI

TV Orchestra, Katowice

and the Polish Radio

Choir of Krakow

Music Consultant

Malgorzata Jaworska

Costume Design

Dorota Roqueplo

Wardrobe

Monika Sajko

Make-up

Anna Adamek

Grazyna Dabrowska

Titles

Plume Partners

Sound Recordists

Wiesława Dembinska

Music:

Michał Gola

Jacek Zietkowski

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-Recordist

Richard King

Body Consultant

Robert Lloyd

Advisor

Henning Ornbak

Cast

Max von Sydow

Henry Kesdi

Lothaire Bluteau

Stefan Bugajski

Sarah Miles

Helena Kesdi

Sofie Grabel

Annette Berg

Aleksander Bardini

Professor Jerzy Kern

Peter Hesse Overgaard

Joseph Kesdi

Lars Lunoe

Doctor

Slawomira Lozinska

Doctor's Wife

Trevor Cooper

Muller

Stanislaw Brodygant

Maier

Beata Tyszkiewicz

Gelda

Maja Piaszynska

Baby Thomas

Peter Thunroff

Wiktor Zborowski

Krzyszyna Mierzejewska

Stanislaw Holly

Catherine Thornborrow

Engenia Herman

Interviewees

Piotr Wojtowicz

Wasia Maslennikov

Television Crew

Krzyszyna Chmielewski

Secretary

6,612 feet

96 minutes

tance of Kesdi, who remains unconvinced that the silence that descended on Kesdi after the death of his first wife in the Holocaust can ever be broken. In their house set in its own woods, Helena Kesdi tries to interest the sick and reclusive Henry in an offer from his nephew Joseph to finance a relaunch of his career. Joseph and his associates are thrown out. Simultaneously Stefan arrives and is seen lurking in the woods. Henry grabs his gun, but Stefan manages to slip his letter to the sceptical Helena. Next day Stefan darts into the house, tells Henry that his bad back is caused by sleeping over a stream that runs beneath the house and counsels a change of bedroom. The furious Henry knives him in the wrist and Stefan retreats to the woods.

The next night Henry moves his bedding to the other side of the house and his back pain eases. He invites Stefan for breakfast. Stefan plays him the refrain, which Henry recognises as a Jewish melody he once tried to use. He orders that Stefan be given the spare room. That night Stefan cures him of asthma by applying pressure to his temples. Henry insists that he is an angel. Henry throws himself into work and asks for a musical secretary. That night he goes to Helena's bed for the first time in years. Next morning, Stefan finds Henry a secretary in the young conservatoire student Annette Berg. Henry's doctor insists that the return to work may kill him. Annette arrives for work and Henry discusses music and flirts with her. Stefan arranges a date with Annette, which sends Henry into a rage. The date goes badly, Annette rejecting Stefan's advances. As Henry's music progresses, so does his feeling for Annette, and they begin an affair. As the music and the love affair become more intense, Stefan suffers excruciating pain in his wounded arm.

In a television interview on completion of the new work, Henry ascribes his new creativity to his guardian angel. Stefan's wound now bleeds regularly and at Henry's birthday party he collapses and is rushed to hospital. Rehearsals proceed, while the doctor warns Stefan that Henry's symptoms are unmistakable. Annette tells Helena that she is pregnant. Helena visits Stefan in hospital and orders him to leave as soon as he recovers. Henry conducts the gala premiere of his opus while Stefan and the doctor watch on TV relay. At the thunderous climax, Henry collapses and is taken to hospital, where Stefan is found to have recovered. A year later, Stefan, now teaching music in Cracow, gets a telephone call from Helena summoning him to visit the dying Henry. She and Annette are taking care of him and Annette's asthmatic baby son. Stefan tells Henry that he can no longer help him, and Henry, now reconciled to death, comforts him. Stefan picks up the asthmatic child and the boy's wheezing stops.

The Silent Touch is about art and inspiration, art and goodness, art and life. It combines lengthy dis-



Gorilla in the mist: Michael Kirby



Get some sleep: Sofia Grabol, Max von Sydow

◀ cussion of these subjects with the creation of a new work by the composer Henry Kesi. But films about music are notoriously difficult to bring off, as another central European director, István Szabó, demonstrated recently with *Meeting Venus*. And *The Silent Touch*, as a film about art, is neither original nor inspired. It is not just that the sub-Orffian oratorio performed at the climax (in fact, "Exodus" by Wojciech Kilar, whose music can be heard in Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula*) is, for all its thunder, unconvincing as the release of imprisoned genius. It is also that all the talk of the victory of art and goodness over silence and evil lacks substance – the perfunctory treatment of the theme of genocide is typical in this respect – just as the extravagant complaints Henry makes about modern music as a "pollution of silence", though occasionally amusing (it all reminds him of toenail clippings), are predictable and evasive.

This predictability extends to the characters – selfish, irascible artist Henry, long-suffering but loyal wife Helena, vital young muse Annette – and to the doggedly articulated plot, in which the intrusions into the household of both Stefan and Annette follow heavily signposted paths. The dialogue too, despite its regular returning to the subject of passion, seems etiolated and highmindedly old-fashioned. *The Silent Touch* is the first project to have benefited from the European Co-Production Fund and the script, originally a story by Zanussi and a Polish collaborator, then worked into a screenplay by Peter Morgan and Mark Wadlow, shows signs of the statelessness such projects risk.

In another respect, though, international co-operation has worked well. The initial scenes in Cracow with Stefan waking from nightmare like a pale, haunted Dostoevskian youth, and talking feverishly to his professor (Aleksander Bardini, the doctor in Kies-

lowski's *Decalogue 2*) and his later sojourn in the Danish woods are the most confident in the film, with an assured sense of place and behaviour. Central to the meaning of *The Silent Touch* is the enigma of the 'angel' Stefan and his mysterious effect on Henry. In the *Acts of the Apostles* St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is described as "full of grace and power," as doing "great wonders and signs among the people," for whom "his face was like the face of an angel." This Stefan bursts into Henry's household as astonishingly as Terence Stamp in Pasolini's *Teorema*, and Henry himself is initially bemused and resistant (both to art and to goodness), once even calling him Mephistopheles. What is the nature of their symbiosis? Stefan himself seems to have no life – no talent as a composer, no success with Annette – and yet he alone can restore Henry both physically and artistically. His wound, caused by Henry, bleeds like stigmata at the moments of Henry's greatest passion. And at the end, Henry, reconciled to art, life and death, is able to console him in return. Though this allegory of the power of goodness remains opaque and not entirely persuasive, nevertheless it is precisely its lack of explicitness that makes it the resonating core of the film.

As Henry, the petulant, tyrannical genius, Max von Sydow has little to do that he has not done many times before – except perhaps to smash so much crockery. But Sarah Miles, rarely seen these days, brings a taut conviction to the fading Helena. And Lothaire Bluteau displays the same startling intensity he showed in *Jesus of Montreal* and *Black Robe* in the central role of Stefan, by turns exuberant and anguished, confident and bewildered. Asked by the doctor why he was so determined that Henry should complete his opus, he says, "I just wanted to get some sleep."

Julian Gaffey

Sniper

USA 1992

Director: Luis Llosa

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

Baltimore Pictures

Executive Producers

Mark Johnson

Walton Green

Patrick Wachsberger

Producer

Robert L. Rosen

Co-producers

Jim Gorman

Charles J.D. Schlissel

Associate Producers

Amanda Nelligan

Gregory A. Gale

Grant Hill

Production Co-ordinator

Jennifer Crowley

Unit Production Manager

Grant Hill

Location Manager

Murray Boyd

Casting

Louis Di Giarmo

Assistant Directors

Colin Fletcher

Nikki Long

John Martin

Screenplay

Michael Frost Beckner

Crash Leyland

Director of Photography

Bill Butler

Colour

Atlab

Prints

Film House

Camera Operators

David Crone

Danny Batterham

Editor

Scott Smith

Production Designer

Herbert Pinter

Art Director

Nicholas McCallum

Set Decorators

Leanne Cornish

Angus Tattle

Scenic Artist

Simon Clayton

Special Effects

Brian Cox

Brian Pearce

David Hardie

Music

Gary Chang

Music Editor

Richard Whitfield

Song

"Medicine Man"

by Henry Lee Summer

Costume Design

Ray Summers

Costume Supervisor

Kerry Thompson

Special Make-up Effects

Allan Apone

Supervising Sound Editor

Barney Cabral

Sound Editors

Mark Hollingsworth

Donlee Jorgenson

Kelly Cabral

Norto Sepulveda

Toby Brown

Phil Haberman

Sound Recordist

Paul Brincat

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

David John West

Doug Turner

Ray West

Robert Glass

Foley Artists

Patrick Cabral

Diane Marshall

Advisers

Military:

William Curtin

Sniper:

Major Tom D. Ferran III

Stunt Co-ordinators

Glenn Ruehlend

Bobby Foxworth

Stunts

Greg Stuart

Richard Boué

Armourer

William Curtin

Cast

Tom Berenger

Tom Beckett

Billy Zane

Richard Miller

Aden Young

Doug Papich

Ken Rodery

El Cirujano

J.T. Walsh

Beckett's Senior Officer

Rinaldo Anas

Cacique

Gary Swanson

Officer in Washington

Mark Garrett

Admiral in Washington

Frederick Miraglietta

Alvarez

Vanessa Steele

Mrs Alvarez

Carlos Alvarez

Raul Othos

Tyler Copin

Ripoly

Ted Gebert

Ripoly's Friend

Edward Wiley

DeSilva/Rebel Sniper

William Curtin

Mountain Top Pilot

Howard Bosse

Mountain Top Co-pilot

Christos A. Linos

Mountain Top Sniper

Christopher Morley

Soldier at Pool Table

Donald Bates

Soldier at Bar

Raj Sidhu

Soldier in Barn

Roy Edmunds

Cabrera

Johnny Rason

Crew Chief

Leary Cortez

Father Ruiz

Jerome Bustamante

Rebel Captain

8,763 feet

97 minutes

Panama, post Noriega. Fearful of interference by rebel forces in the upcoming democratic elections, Washington government agencies set in motion a covert operation to assassinate their leader, General Alvarez. Ambitious young bureaucrat Richard Miller is sent to partner master marine sniper Tom Beckett. The mission is simple on paper: one shot, then out. But Miller – with no combat experience and a by-the-book manner – is unprepared for the grisly realities of a tidily contracted death.

Veteran of 78 kills, Beckett is a tormented man whose legendary success has cast him as ever more the outsider. Viewed with superstitious mistrust by the regular marines, his only show of affection is for the dog tags of dead former partners that he carries around with him and fingers absentmindedly like worry beads. Reaction to Miller is one of instant antipathy and mutual disrespect, their foray into the jungle a cagey exchange of cocky greenhorn with a taciturn man-who's-seen-it-all. Within Beckett's realm, Miller's political authority falls by the wayside and he's coerced into helping a local guerrilla troupe in exchange for their help through unknown terrain. Unable to pull the trigger on a man he has in his sights, Miller earns everyone's scorn and is further harangued as they continue towards their target.

Though heavily protected by bodyguards the assassination is successful, but on their retreat Miller flips out – a combination of having killed for the first time and Beckett's claim that the mission isn't over yet. They start to fight but are soon interrupted by the appearance of enemy troops who capture Beckett as Miller heads towards the approaching rescue helicopter.

Tortured to the point of unconsciousness by the infamous El Cirujano (Miller's 'missed' target in the guerrilla debacle), Miller reappears and saves his partner. Dragging Beckett to the new pick-up point, Miller is unaware that one of Alvarez's men is tailing him; as he moves in for the kill Beckett spots him and guns him down. The score even, the two snipers clamber into the helicopter and fly back to their respective 'real' lives.



Bite the bullet: Billy Zane

Sniper - not *The Sniper* nor *Snipers*, non-specific and singular, like *Predator*. It's a title that speaks of function as identity, an efficient menace. Distant, with maybe a touch of idolatry. Who's going to be drawn to a film called *Sniper*, except perhaps gun freaks? It sounds too detached to be an all-out action film, conjuring up phrases like "surgical strikes" - snipers don't touch, they reach out and tamper with history.

This is a war film shrunk down to the barest essentials - in this two-man unit, the all-male camaraderie is reduced to one-on-one exchanges. Difference - age, education, aspiration - is strictly between the two: common ground is the film's target, the closure it moves towards. Miller and Beckett's exchanges are repeatedly phrased as conflict, but on screen it all looks very different. Both film-star beautiful, their contrasting expert/beginner statuses cast them as father and son, this mission a rite of passage. The moral horror of killing is the script's intended address, Beckett admitting to a loathing for his profession, but what the audience sees is gunplay spectacle and emoting, through which the boy becomes a man. On that count, *Sniper* is not the psychologically insightful thriller its writers want it to be, a short-fall that formulaic dialogue and characterisation do nothing to obscure. But director Llosa (incidentally Mario Vargas Llosa's cousin) is a fine action director, and it's when Berenger and Zane aren't obliged to breathe life into weak lines that the film erupts into its own with a series of tensely drawn combat sequences. Brian Pearson's special effects sniper footage - of rifle sight p.o.v. and tracking the trajectory of s-l-o-w-e-d down speeding bullets - doesn't necessarily get you any closer to the sniper's psyche, but does have a rollercoaster thrill to it (and a future home in 1001 students' essays on the cinematic gaze).

Concentration on the 'personal' aspects of war, though, is at the expense of any consideration of American interventionist policies, Alvarez's badness taken as reason enough. This naive world-view permeates into *Sniper*'s vision of back home - Miller's fiancée waiting, Beckett's impossible dream of retiring with a fish farm; fighting for the American way. Just old-fashioned, perhaps, but embodying a reactionary politic that hedges the 'right' of anyone to kill for country in the first place - a fundamental concern, surely, for Miller as he moves from armchair patriot to active participant. It's these major oversights that keep *Sniper* within the realms of the pedestrian, unsatisfying with occasional glimmers of a lean action film bubbling up underneath. Berenger and Zane, as alone in this script as they are in the jungle, do what they can with the clichés, sniper *père* even coming across as fairly sympathetic. But this is no journey into the heart of darkness, more an undercover ramble with Uncle Sam.

Paul Tarrago

El Sol de Membrillo (The Quince Tree Sun)

Spain 1991

Director: Victor Erice

Certificate

U

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Company

Maria Moreno P.C.

With the participation

of Euskal Media/Igeldo

Zine Produksioak

With financial

assistance from The

Spanish Institute of

Cinematography and

Audiovisual Arts

Executive Producer

Maria Moreno

Associate Producer

Angel Amigo

Assistant Directors

Jos Oliver

Francisco J. Lucio

Original Idea

Antonio López

Victor Erice

Based on a work by

Antonio Lopez Garcia

Directors of Photography

Javier Aguirresarobe

Angel Luis Fernández

In colour

Video Photography

José Luis López Linares

Editor

Juan Ignacio San Mateo

Music

Pascal Gaigne

Sound Recordists

Ricardo Steinberg

Daniel Goldstein

Sound Re-recorder

Eduardo Fernández

Sound Effects

Taller de Ruidos

Cast

Antonio López

Maria Moreno

Enrique Gran

José Carreras

Maria López

Carmen López

Elisa Ruiz

Amelia Arla

Lucio Muñoz

Esperanza Parada

Julio López Fernández

Janusz Pietrzak

Marek Domagala

Grzegorz Ponikwia

Fan Xiao Ming

Yan Sheng Dong

12,353 feet

137 minutes

Subtitles

Together they recall their contemporaries, their tutors, and their shared passion for music, and they discuss Antonio's copy of the Michelangelo painting, *The Last Judgement*. October 24: unable to contend with the constant changes of light, Antonio decides that it is time to prepare a new canvas, with Maria's help, and his 'first draft' is deposited in the cellar. October 26: a puddle of rainwater at his feet, he begins anew, drawing the quince tree in intricate detail. The weather soon improves, but the days are now much colder.

Visited by a Chinese admirer, Fan Xiao Ming, and her interpreter Yan Sheng Dong, Antonio explains aspects of his technique and his identification with the tree's development. He hopes to finish before the quinces fall, but as November goes by it is clear that he is losing the race. November 23: Enrique comes to encourage him, holding drooping leaves in place to be sketched, and they harmonise a favourite song. By December 3, the tree is shedding its fruit, and on Monday December 10 Antonio at last admits defeat. The workmen take away the awning and sample some ripe quince without enthusiasm. Now that Antonio is available to her again, Maria sets up a partially-completed canvas, poses him on a bed, and resumes painting. At first he is full of suggestions, but soon he falls asleep and she leaves him to his dreams. The following spring, the tree sprouts new leaves and paint-free buds.

Such an expanse of years separates the three films of Victor Erice, who has filled the intervals with work for the movie magazine *Nuestro Cine* and screenplays for other directors, that it is probably unreasonable to expect from *The Quince Tree Sun* a clear continuation of the moods and motifs of *Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) and *The South* (1983). The particular attraction of his first two films was that they matched each other so well, both in the beauty of Erice's visual phrasing and in his exploration of small families haunted by inarticulate secrets. At first shock, *The Quince Tree Sun* seems a complete break from these intricate stories: it presents itself as a documentary

about an artist at work, his daily routine pedantically dated, his method piercingly scrutinised, his visitors dispassionately spied upon, his achievements and failures recorded without comment. According to Erice, wise after the event, this collection of actualities provides ready answers to the immediate questions, "Who is the artist?", "What is he painting?", and "How does he do it?". Fortunately, the experience is rather less simple.

The artist, for a start, is unidentified by any conventional means such as an opening title, catalogues, posters, the usual decor of a public life - to such an extent that, regardless of whether Antonio López is widely known in art circles outside Spain, he could well be a completely fictional character, his paints applied to canvas either by a talented actor or by neatly-edited sleight of hand in the manner of *La Belle Noiseuse*. The film avoids the usual documentary approach, in which López would have talked direct to camera, introduced the film crew to his visitors, and conceded that the awareness of being filmed inevitably affects his manner, his behaviour and his work. Instead, Erice marshals 'reality' into a form of deception by seeking to persuade the audience of his own absence. He is much assisted by his 'cast', who contrive to ignore him with such conviction that one could swear that the Polish workmen studied their roles from *Moonlighting* and *Riff-Raff*, while Enrique Gran, bursting with anecdotes, clearly exercises an epic talent whether or not any camera happens to roll in his vicinity.

The drama is greatly enhanced by the fact - if we can accept it as factual - of López's struggle with his subject on a steadily dwindling time-scale. The mystery-suspense aspects of Erice's other films unexpectedly reappear here not only in the underlying questions of who, what and how, but also in the sense of a self-imposed struggle against ungovernable forces - the efforts by López to decipher an acceptable portrait of his arboreal model before it disintegrates. Reinforcing this detective structure is the welcome intervention of a Chinese admirer whose interrogation elicits most of ▶



Light mask: 'The Quince Tree Sun'

◀ the answers the film has so far refused to provide – such as what the tree is doing there and why López is painting it. Beautifully framed by an apparently invisible lens peering out at her from a nest of leaves, she extracts from López the vital secret of a technique that has bestowed almost more paint on the tree than on the canvas, along with his admission of an obsessive identification with the tree's cycle of growth and yield. The insight is valuable, partly for the complexity it imparts to the "Who is the artist?" puzzle and partly for the link it clarifies between this 'fiction' and the earlier films. By apparent accident, Erice has found another troubled patriarch with mysterious and elusive skills, irremediably discontented with his achievements, vaguely adrift from his family.

As if these correlative themes at last insist too loudly, Erice changes his story when the quinces fall. Suddenly the camera shows itself and stands transfixed by the spectacle of the decaying fruit in admission that the evolution from mellow gold to wrinkled decay has been the prime objective all along. His project split in two, Erice leaves the 'documentary' to take its course and unmasks the surprise ending to his thriller: López becomes a subject from his wife's canvas, a man like other Erice protagonists, seen through female eyes. Firmly fending off his suggestions for improvement, Maria paints him in anything but quince-tree colours, laid out formally on a bed, dead or dreaming, a model of evasion. It would be no surprise that she turns out to have co-produced the film, except that her presence throughout has been so muted as to seem irrelevant. We find, through her artwork, manipulation that López has sought to exorcise from his own canvases; where he seems honestly to have attempted to let the tree express itself, Maria permits no such nonsense. She paints (and films) him in accordance with her concept.

They argue over what, in her painting, he should be holding. He produces a small crystal sphere, and before you can say 'Charles Foster Kane', it's falling from his hand. As a man of the cinema, Erice should know better than this – and of course does. While *The Quince Tree Sun* is indeed an enquiry into a life unsure of its meaning, the crystal also reflects an aside in the Borges story 'Death and the Compass', which Erice was adapting into a screenplay in 1990 alongside his preparations for filming López. In this light, his production stands revealed as a Borgesian document, packed with precise designations, meaningless measurements and unreliable histories – a detective story driven by a predestined circularity to prove nothing of major consequence. If López is the tolerant humourist he appears to be, he must have enjoyed this leisurely, ambivalent interpretation of his arduous autumn, in which his work gradually and uncontrollably becomes the margin to an altogether different memoir.

Philip Strick

Trespass

USA 1992

Director: Walter Hill

Certificates

18

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Universal

Executive Producers

Robert Zemeckis
Bob Gale

Producer

Neil Canton

Co-producer

Michael S. Glick

Production Co-ordinator

Cynthia Von Suhr

Unit Production Manager

Michael S. Glick

Location Manager

David Salven

2nd Unit Director

Allan Graf

Costing

Reuben Cannon

Assistant Directors

Barry E. Thomas

Sandra Middleton

Kevin Williams

Screenplay

Bob Gale

Robert Zemeckis

Director of Photography

Lloyd Ahern

Colour

DeLuxe

Camera Operators

Robert La Bonge

Bill Barber

Video Operator

Greg Morse

Editor

Freeman Davies

Production Designer

Jon Hutman

Art Director

Charles Breen

Set Design

Kathleen Sullivan

Set Decorator

Beth Rubino

Set Dressers

Russell Jones

Rex Farmer

Tommy Gilbert

Buddy Rodgers

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Joe Di Gaetano

Special Effects

Foreman:

Charles Edward

Stewart

Bob Vazquez

Jeffrey Knott

Kathleen (KT) Tonkin

Russell Hardee

Ken Reid

Tim Tonkin

David Kutchinski

Sam Barkan

Music

Ry Cooder

Music performed by

Ry Cooder

Jim Keltner

Jon Hassell

Music Supervisors

Sharon Boyle

Jorge Hinojosa

Music Editor

Bunny Andrews

Songs

"Trespass" by and

performed by Ice T and

Ice Cube; "Party Lights"

by and performed by

Junior Brown; "Depths

of Hell" by Ice T, DJ

Aladdin, performed by

Ice T featuring Daddy

Nitro; "Quick Way Out"

by W.C. and Coolio,

performed by W.C. and

The Maad Circle; "You

Know What I'm About"

by and performed by

Lord Finesse; "Gotta

Do What I Gotta Do" by

C. Ridenhour, G. C-Wiz,

H. Shocklee, II

Shocklee, performed
by Public Enemy; "I'm
Gonna Smoke Him" by

Donald Lamont, Bilal
Bashir, performed by

Donald D; "Don't Be
a 304" by Jason Lewis,
performed by AMG;

"I Check My Bank"

by and performed
by Sir Mix-A-Lot; "Gotta

Get Over (Taking Loo)"

by Keith Elam,
Christopher Martin,

performed by Gang
Starr; "On the Wall"

by and performed
by Black Sheep

Costume Design

Dan Moore

Costume Supervisor

Colby Bart

Make-up

Key:

Jay Cannistraci

Judy Ponder-Patton

Title Design

Eric Fitzgerald

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor

Jay Wilkinson

Sound Editors

David A. Arnold

Lucy Goldsow

Teri E. Dorman

Scott A. Hecker

David Kulczycki

John A. Larsen

Rodger Pardee

ADR Editor

Jerelyn J. Harding

Sound Recordists

Charles M. Wilborn

Brian Paccassi

ADR:

Alan Bond

Foley:

Nerves Gezalayan

Music:

Allen Sides

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Gregg Landaker

Additional:

Steve Maslow

Kevin O'Connell

ADR:

Charleen Richards

Foley:

Jim Ashwill

Special Sound

Effects Design

John Joseph Thomas

Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

Alicia Stevenson

Stunt Co-ordinator

Allan Graf

Stunts

Ken Bates

Nick Brett

Tony Brubaker

Jeff Cadiente

Chris Durand

Otsaun Elam

Steve Kelso

Mathews

Mario Roberts

Gilbert Rosales

Tierre Turner

Gerard G. Williams

Merritt Yohnka

Cast

BM Paxton

Vince

Ice T

King James

William Sadler

Don

Ice Cube

Savon

Art Evans

Bradlee

De'Voreaux White

Lucky

Bruce A. Young
Raymond
Glen Plummer
Luther
Stoney Jackson
Wickey
T.E. Russell
Video
Tiny Lister
Cletus
John Tolo-Bay
Goose

Byron Billins
Moon
Tico Wells
Davis
Hal Landon Jr
Eugene DeLong
James Pickens Jr
Police Officer Reese
L. Warren Young
Police Officer Foley

9,105 feet
101 minutes

East St Louis, Illinois: Goose, a young black gang member, shoots another dead. Watching the sequence on video tape, gang leader King James orders for Goose to be disposed of, and a secluded derelict factory is chosen for the job. In smalltown Arkansas, 200 miles away, fire-fighters Vince and Don are tackling a house blaze. An elderly man breaks free of the flames, delirious, and thrusts some papers into Vince's hands before walking deliberately back into the fire. Vince realises that the old man has given him a newspaper cutting reporting the theft of gold from an East St Louis church 50 years earlier, together with a map pointing to the gold's hiding place in the factory. Determined to find the treasure, Vince and Don drive to Illinois, and following the map's directions, they end up in the building's most secure room. Their treasure hunt is cut short when Vince is attacked by a middle-aged black man, Bradlee, who has made the factory his home. Don pulls him off, and despite Vince's protests, binds him to a chair.

Don and Vince resume the hunt only to stop when they hear Goose and King James' brother Lucky arrive. Don, unseen, follows them onto the roof where a trap is sprung: Goose is confronted by King James and his gang, including Video, who records all the gang's actions on a camcorder. Struck, Goose falls through a skylight. Vince, curious, has left the safe room and witnesses the fall; in turn he is seen by the gang. As the gang moves in on Vince, Don reappears, seizes Lucky and uses him as a shield. In the safe room, Don frisks Lucky, finding drugs, and, as protection against attack, fixes him by his arms to the door. The gang surrounds the building, communicating by mobile phone, while King James sends for Raymond, a fixer who arrives with

powerful weapons and props including a police officer's uniform. He choreographs a mock police bust. Vince, drawn to the window, narrowly misses being hit by one of the gang's marksmen.

Taking stock, King James, for whom Lucky's safety is paramount, orders that nobody should shoot without his command. Don and Vince resume the hunt and find the gold: forgetting their predicament, they rejoice until a catwalk, which had seemed their only escape route, is shot down. Meanwhile, checking out Don's car, Raymond discovers the map and newspaper clipping. Returning to the gang, he is stopped by a police officer, a scene witnessed from the window by Vince, who attempts to cry out. Don quiets him and they fight, while the officer pulls away. Raymond tells Savon, a gang member who throughout has been questioning James' leadership, about the treasure: they agree to keep the information to themselves.

Finding an escape route via a chimney, Don and Vince decide to dope up Lucky. Lucky persuades Don to let him inject himself, but stabs the syringe into Don's neck. Vince and Lucky struggle, until a gang marksman accidentally shoots Lucky dead through the window. James is told and, set on revenge, rushes up to the room, only to be shot by a revived Don, who is killed in return. Savon activates a timer device, designed to burn down the factory. Vince escapes, leaving Bradlee with the loot. Savon discovers him hiding and seizes the gold, but spares his life. Raymond intercepts Savon, but each shoots the other. Finding Vince outside looking at the factory in flames, Bradlee tells him how Don got away with the gold, and advises him to flee from the gang, while he himself walks away with the loot.

● The optimist in need of an upbeat fix might take from *Trespass* the homily, "We're all the same under the skin" – even if the homogeneity is not the sort we can warm ourselves on. Yet similarity in motivation and reflex is what binds Don and Vince to the black gang when all cultural markers seem to set them apart.

Director Walter Hill likes to reduce



Party out of bounds: William Sadler, De'Voreaux White

characters to basics, and he likes his heroes strong and laconic with just a hint of compassion that often proves a fallibility. Here both King James and Don fit the bill. Indeed, Hill's characters might all be drawn from a western blueprint, although *Trespass* – originally *Looters* until the LA riots rendered the title impolitic – is more obviously a meshing of the fashionable gangster-rap genre with an old-style treasure hunt (eg. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*). The set-up is established with economy: the videotaped killing flags the world of drugs and gangs which stands in contrast to the small-town bar in which Don and Vince discuss their trip. It is a contrast which the soundtrack also carries, so that our introduction to the old factory is accompanied by Ry Cooder's adept blending of hints of country with rap's remorseless rhythm. Menace completes Hill's shorthand: during the prelude to the gang's arrival, when we are still clinging onto Don and Vince's treasure hunt story, the camera lingers on each blow of the gold-digging pickaxe with the promise of violence to come.

And it comes, of course – this is, after all, a Walter Hill film (very much so – it bears no evident marks of scriptwriters Gale and Zemeckis). Characters, conforming to the existentialist imperative, make themselves through action. The sides, however, have discrepant resources: the gang is hi-tech, in touch via mobile phones, armed with hugely powerful weapons, in contrast to Don and Vince with their gun and a quaint metal detector. This forms part of *Trespass*'s wider, underlined distinction between an older, down-home America and the ultra-modern, dystopian one. There is a nice divergence in the outside help each turns to: Vince wonders when the police will turn up, while King James calls in arms supplier Raymond. However, beyond the trappings, so the moral goes, both sides are made of the same stuff with, if anything, the clearest signs of any higher motive shown by King James (played with an impressive, loaded poise by Ice-T) who is driven by his concern for Lucky's safety.

The cultural contrasts are overplayed (Don, attempting to convince James of his good faith, asks for a Bible to swear on!), only compounding the flat writing and broadly drawn characters. Initially redeemed by the coherence and pace of the narrative, these failings jar as the taut construction becomes merely mechanical and even sloppy. Action resulting from credible behaviour gives way to plot devices, such as Don unaccountably yielding to Lucky's plea to free his arm, which leads to the bloody finale. This closing sequence, a chain reaction of shootings and pass-the-parcel with the gold, far exceeds the release of any remaining tensions, achieving the action turnover of a hyperactive pop promo. Also shot through by this stage is the film's sureness of tone, with Bradlee's final sauntering off somewhere between justice done and whimsy.

Robert Yates

Used People

USA 1992

Director: Beeban Kidron

Certificate

12

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

Largo Entertainment

Executive Producers

Lloyd Levin

Michael Barnathan

Producer

Peggy Rajski

Production Supervisor

Jack Roe

Production Co-ordinators

Mara McSweeney

Shell Hecht

Eddie Ioffreda

Production Managers

David Coatsworth

Diana Pokorny

Location Managers

Beth Boigon

Andy Cooke

Darren Wiseman

Casting

Ross Clydesdale

Assistant Directors

Tony Lucibello

Walter J. Gasparovic

Anne-Marie Ferney

Rose Tedesco

Mike Samson

Michael Ingber

Matthew T. Weiner

Screenplay

Todd Graff

Based on his play

The Grandma Plays

Director of Photography

David Watkin

Colour

Deluxe

Camera Operators

Harald Ortenburger

Dick Mingalone

Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Editor

John Tintori

Production Designer

Stuart Wurtzel

Art Directors

Gregory Paul Keen

Rick Butler

Set Decorators

Hilton Rosemarin

Susan Bode

Set Dresser

David Orin Charles

Scenic Artist

Mathew Lammerich

Special Effects

Martin Malivoire

Doug Graham

Music

Rachel Portman

Music Director

David Snell

Music Extracts

"Ha fuggi il traditor",

"Di quella pira",

"Questa è quella"

Music Supervisor

Karyn Rachtman

Music Editor

Bill Abbott

Songs

"Tell It Like It Is"

by George Davis, Lee

Diamond, performed

by Aaron Neville;

"I Heard It Through the

Grapevine" by Barrett

Strong, Norman

Whitfield, performed

by Marvin Gaye;

"Where Are the

Words?" by Jack

Feldman, Rachel

Portman: "It's Not

Unusual" by Gordon

Mills, Les Reed,

performed by Tom

Jones; "Grandma

Boogie" by Bill

Kowalchuk; "Since

I Fell for You" by Buddy

Johnson, performed by

Lenny Welch; "Monday

Monday" by John

Phillips, performed

by The Mamas and

The Papas; "Can't Seem

to Make You Mine" by

Sky Saxon, performed

by The Seeds; "Mrs

Robinson" by Paul

Simon, performed

by Simon & Garfunkel;

"Moon Over Miami" by

Joe Burke, Edgar Leslie;

"The Sky Fell Down"

by Louis Alter, Edward

Heyman, performed

by Tommy Dorsey,

Frank Sinatra

Choreography

Pat Birch

Costume Design

Marilyn Vance-Straker

Wardrobe Supervisors

Arthur Rowsell

Lisa Lovas

Marsha Whitney

Jill E. Anderson

Wardrobe Master

Kim Chow

Make-up Artists

Ann Brodie

Suzanne Benoit

Katie Bihl

Title Design

R. Greenberg Associates

Supervising Sound Editors

Mark P. Stoecinger

Wylie Stateman

Sound Editors

Christopher Assells

Dialogue:

Stuart Copley

Louis Kleinman

Ascher Yates

Jeff Rosen

ADR Supervisor

Avram Gold

ADR Editor

Joe Mayer

Sound Recordists

Douglas Ganton

Tod Maitland

Dennis Maitland

Kim Maitland

Stephen E. Scanlon

ADR Recordists

Tami Treadwell

Dolby stereo

ADR Voices

Mitch Carter

Dominic Hoffman

Howard Himmelstein

Donna Lynn Leavy

Enid Kent

Richard Minchenberg

Nick Miscusi

Elisa Pensler

Jan Rabson

Susan Silo

Toby Stone

Dennis Tufano

Alan Woolf

Lynn Anne Zager

Sound Re-recordists

Sergio Reyes

Richard Overton

Chris David

ADR:

Tommy Goodwin

Stunt Co-ordinator

Glenn H. Randall Jr

Film Extract

The Graduate (1967)

Cast

Shirley MacLaine

Pearl Berman

Marcello Mastroianni

Joe Meledandri

Bob D'Amico

Jack Berman

Kathy Bates

Bibby

Jessica Tandy

Freida

Marcia Gay Harden

Norma

Emma Tamm

Young Bibby

Asia Vieira

Young Norma

Lee Wallace

Uncle Harry

Louis Cess

Uncle Normy

Glenn Filer

Mark

Maia Filar

Rhonda

Irving Melzman

Uncle Al

Matthew Bramton

Eddie

David Gow

Bill the Jeweller

Sylvia Sidney

Becky

Doris Roberts

Aunt Lonnie

Nolan Hanft

Aunt Ruthie

Jeremy Trece

Cousin Matthew

Stuart Stone

Cousin Stevie

Rosario Russo

Theresa

Charles Cioffi

Paolo

Diane D'Aquila

Rose

Joe Pantoliano

Frank

Sam Hirschman

Crying Baby

Ida Bernardini

Aunt Louisa

James Richardson

Joe

Janet Richardson

Carla

Philip Williams

Vic

Michael Ricupero

Eddie

Genevieve Langlois

French Teacher

Luba Goy

Nursing Home Staff

Member

Dominic Cuzzocrea

Rabbi

Jim Millan

Priest

Stephanie Voves

Girl at Wedding

10,441 feet

116 minutes

1946. Queens, New York. Jack Berman returns home. His wife Pearl stands at the stove, complaining about their two young daughters. Jack takes her in his arms and waltzes her about the room. It is the first time they have danced in years. 1969. Family and friends gather at Pearl's apartment after Jack's funeral. Four generations are present. Pearl's elderly mother, Freida, and her friend of six decades, Becky, debate the merits of retiring to Florida. Pearl's daughters keep their distance: Bibby, divorced, overweight, unhappy mother-of-two; and Norma, divorced, glamorous and mentally unstable. Meanwhile Norma's neglected young son Sweet Pea announces that his grandfather has formed a protective force-field around his body, making him invulnerable. Into this eccentric Jewish gathering comes a handsome Italian widower, Joe Meledandri, who says he knew Jack long ago. Joe asks Pearl out on a date and, to her own surprise, she accepts.

Joe takes her to his brother's bar, where he works as a cook. He tells her that this is where he met Jack back in 1946. Berman had been distraught, on the verge of leaving his wife, whom he loved, but who, he said, was dying a little more each day. It was Joe who advised him to go home and dance with her. Later that night he watched from the street as Jack followed his advice, whereupon he fell in love with Pearl. Stunned, Pearl withdraws into herself. Joe continues to pay court over the next weeks, and eventually she allows him to cook for the family. The meal ends badly when an argument between Bibby and her sister gets out of control. Sweet Pea meanwhile demonstrates his invincible strength to Joe's son-in-law, Frank, a psychiatrist, in an apparently death-defying escapade. Frank agrees to see him without his mother's knowledge.

Pearl allows herself to return Joe's affection. Bibby moves with her children to California, to become her own person. Norma confronts her son about his visits to Frank. Sweet Pea runs off and is on the point of jumping

from a roof when Joe saves him. Norma and Sweet Pea are reconciled after sharing their pain. Pearl becomes a Meledandri and the Bermans become a family once more.

Beeban Kidron's first Hollywood movie is an engagingly eccentric romantic comedy situated just a few blocks away from *Moonstruck*. If it is a surprise to find the director of the BBC TV drama *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Antonia and Jane* plunging into the brittle, bustling world of Queens, tackling three generations of New York-Jewish womanhood, then it could be that *Used People* is less the director's movie than screenwriter Todd Graff's. Certainly this is an impressively written film, bristling with smart one-liners and put-downs ("Jews don't swim – you can't eat at the same time"). Marcello Mastroianni

Wind

USA 1992

Director: Carroll Ballard

Certificate

PG
Distributor
Entertainment

Production Companies
FilmLink International/
The Wind Production
Committee

Executive Producers
Francis Ford Coppola
Fred Fuchs

Producers

Mata Yamamoto

Tom Luddy

Associate Producer

Betsy Pollock

Production Controller

Cynthia Quan

Production Co-ordinators

Jennie Crowley

Stel Deleon

Andrew Loo

Karen Szukik Alvarez

Lisa Matsukawa

Production Managers

Diana Phillips

Grant Hill

Unit Managers

Tam Halling

Richard Kornaat

Location Managers

Robin Clifton

Brownie Warburton

Arlene Sibley

Post-production

Supervisor

John A. Amicarella

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Frances Grace

Costing

Linda Phillips Palo

Assistant Directors

I. Dean Jones

Drew Rosenberg

Brendan Campbell

Sarah Lewis

Colin Fletcher

Screenplay

Rudy Wurlitzer

Mac Gudgeon

Story

Jeff Benjamin

Roger Vaughan

Kimball Livingston

Director of Photography

John Toll

Colour/Prints

Technicolor

2nd Unit Photography

Gary Capo

Aerial Photography

Stan McClain

Camera Operator

Bill Trautvetter

Opticals

Pacific Title

Graphics

Vicki Longbottom

Animated Sequences

Animation Research

Unit

Editor

Michael Chandler

Production Designer

Laurence Eastwood

Art Directors

Nick Bonham

Paul W. Gorfine

Roger S. Crandall

Set Decorators

Richard Hobbs

Bobbie Frankel

Brian Lives

Scenic Artists

Suzi Abbott

Sophie Carhian

Diane Lauritzen

J. Chad Davis

Cliff Davis

Storyboard Artists

Andrew Mayhew

Special Effects

Brian Cox

David Hardie

Models

Russ Ruskins

Mike Meldrum

Mario Miralles

John Nuebell

Music/Music Director

Basil Poledouris

Music Extract

"Madame Butterfly"

by Giacomo Puccini,

performed by Veronica

Kinnes, Peter Dvorsky,

The Hungarian State

Opera Chamber

Chorus and Orchestra

Orchestrations

Greg McRitchie

Music Editor

Jeffrey Stephens

Music Consultant

Bones Howe

Songs

"My Baby Let Me

Down" by and

performed by Lucky

Oceans; "A Dream

Comes Back To You"

by Wendy Waldman,

performed by

Wendy Waldman

Costume Design

Marit Allen

Wardrobe Supervisors

Kerry Thompson

Deborah Holbrook

Deirdre Williams

Make-up

Sharon Ison

Kirsten Vessey

Felicity Bowing

Titles

Pacific Title

Sound Design

Alan Splet

Sound Editors

Frank Bulner

Patrick Dold

Ewa Szymplek-Oatfield

Ann Kroeber

John Verbeck

Jeffrey Kroeber

Hugh Waddell

ADR Supervisor

Jeff Watts

ADR

David Bergad

Sound Recordists

Drew Kunin

Musicians

Tim Boyle

Sound Re-recordists

Leslie Shatz

Alan Splet

Marian Wallace

Foley

Ernie Fosselius

Stunt Co-ordinators

Chris Anderson

Arch Roberts

Sailing Doubles

Peter Gilmour

Skip Lissiman

Trevor Hellier

Lisa Blackaller

Bob Campbell

Dave Pearce

James Harke

Adrienne Cahalan

Luke Devine

Steve Burt

Michael Dunbar

Sailing Master

Peter Gilmour

Boat Co-ordinators

Jessie Kendall-Kerr

Joe Krawczyk

Boat Wranglers

Ross Bridekirk

Gert Jacoby



Hot air: Matthew Modine, Jennifer Grey

Cast

Matthew Modine

Will Parker

Jennifer Grey

Kate Bass

Cliff Robertson

Morgan Weld

Jack Thompson

Jack Neville

Stellan Skarsgard

Joe Heiser

Rebecca Miller

Abigail Weld

Ned Vaughn

Charley Moore

Peter Montgomery

TV Commentator

Elmer Alward

Sarge

Saylor Crowell

Butler

James Robb

George

Michael Higgins

Artemus

Ron Collins

Tad

Ken Kesel

Swami

Bill Boal

Danny

Tom Farvey

Jeff

Ree Pollito

Tony

Matt Malloy

Lyle

Mark Walsh

Spider

Kim Sheridan

Rubsey

Bruce Elio

Sheik

Sean Leonard

Mooney

Tom Darling

Otis

John Sangmeister

Skye

Stewart Silvestri

Tuck

Jay Brown

Hook

Mark McTeague

Mac

Mark Richards

Bruno

Billy Bates

Cat

11,299 feet

126 minutes

Newport, 1983. Will Parker, a young sailor, is called in by millionaire yachting enthusiast Morgan Weld to skipper the reserve boat as Weld prepares to defend the America's Cup against Australian challengers. During the summer, Will's girlfriend Kate Bass arrives to take part alongside Will in a dinghy race, where one of their opponents is Australian skipper Jack Neville. Although Will and Kate crash out of the race, Will realises Kate has a ruthlessness and acumen he lacks. He therefore invites her to be his tactician in the trial race against Weld.

Will wins the race, and is promptly promoted to Weld's main boat Radiance. He has the opportunity to take part in the America's Cup, but is told Kate can't be part of his crew. Although he resents this decision, he abides by it, and Kate leaves him. In her absence, he makes a mistake in the final America's Cup race which allows Neville to win the trophy. Shattered by his failure, Will gives up yachting. He sets off to find Kate, who is now living in the Utah desert with aircraft designer Joe Heiser. She doesn't seem pleased to see Will again; however, he and Joe strike up a rapport, and Will soon inveigles Joe into trying to design a boat to recapture the Cup. Progress is stunted by lack of sponsorship. Will approaches Weld for money; his old benefactor, who is living in curmudgeonly seclusion, refuses to help him, but

Weld's daughter Abigail, with whom Will is now having an affair, agrees to fund the project.

With the boat near completion, Will reunites his old crew. Together, they head to Freemantle, Australia, to try to retrieve the Cup from Neville. In the penultimate race, the two boats collide. Will, rather than win a hollow victory, admits he was at fault and concedes the race. In the final leg, dead calm weather leaves the two yachts stranded halfway round the course. Kate, who is again Will's tactician, manages to find some wind, and the American boat, the Geronimo, takes a substantial lead. After a crew member has a near-fatal accident, Geronimo is overtaken. The Americans are lagging behind and as a last resort use their secret weapon, a 'Whomper' sail designed by Kate. This helps them make up lost ground. The Australians cheat, spiking a hole in the sail as the two boats are tacking side by side. Again, they take the lead. With the finishing line in sight, Geronimo fakes a tack and manages to edge ahead, eventually winning by a short nose. After celebrating the victory, Will realises he is still in love with Kate, and the couple are reunited.

In 1983, yacht skipper Dennis Conner contrived to mislay a piece of sporting silverware that had been in his country's possession for nigh on 140 years, and actually went under the proprietary name of the America's Cup. Seeing Alan Bond scuttle back to Australia with the trophy was quite as big a blow to national pride as it was to lose the World Series to the Toronto Blue Jays. Fortunately, in the way of the best American heroes, Conner had the gumption to go down under four years later and reclaim the prize. His bestselling book *Comeback, My Race for the America's Cup* is the inspiration for Carroll Ballard's film, which charts this minor sporting triumph with exemplary vim, somehow managing to ignore the fact that the America's Cup often seems less a sporting occasion than a celebration of class, privilege and preppy East Coast wealth: sailing hardly ranks with, say, boxing as the stuff of popular Hollywood fable. Still, it is to Ballard and his screenwriters' credit that they manage to fashion such intractable material into an exhilarating movie, albeit one which sometimes risks becoming an old-fashioned paean to outdoor heroism of the Hemingway variety.

Francis Coppola, Ballard's old UCLA classmate, is *Wind's* executive producer, and the picture shares his portly sense of grandeur and spectacle. It is firmly in the tradition of Zoetrope, where the dream is what matters. Just as Coppola's *Tucker* had a revolutionary vision for the American motorcar, Will Parker and his colleagues are obsessed with building a new kind of yacht. And, as you'd expect, financiers are the villains: the idealists have to wrest their dreams from the fists of dour, self-interested big business, here represented by Cliff Robertson's craggy mil-

lionaire. A latterday Croesus who believes he can spend his way to the Cup, Weld lives on a mansion house atop a hill as if testing for a remake of *Citizen Kane*. He is the bitter self-made man, the reactionary who thinks the country has gone soft, and who sees the initial loss of the Cup as a symptom of national decline.

With Ballard, visuals are in the ascendant. His reputation lies in his ability to take fairly humdrum stories and pep them up with spectacular location photography. His *The Black Stallion*, for instance, started life as a cutesy kids' tale, but was transformed into a poetic fable, beautiful to look at and with a ponderous philosophical undertow. Here, he accomplishes something similar with 12-metre yachts. TV coverage of sailing is hamstrung by the fact that boats can only be observed at a distance, and seem to move at snail's pace. Ballard, however, was able to take his crew aboard ship, and what Leni Riefenstahl did for athletics in *Olympia*, he does here for yachting: slow motion, fast motion, hand-held shots, underwater and aerial photography combine to ensure that the race footage, which was filmed simultaneously by three units, is riveting.

On shore, matters are less well handled. The camaraderie and jingoism soon begin to grate, as does the attempt to create a documentary feel. Although Kate's introduction to the crew helps ease the *Boy's Own* feel, the hunky sailors in their waterproofs look like fugitives from cigarette or cola ads. There is no disguising that this is a triumphal narrative, where the resilient All-American boy with a philosophical streak, and an almost British lack of ruthlessness, ends by winning both race and girl.

Fortunately, between races, *Wind* broadens its canvas, taking in locations other than Newport and Freemantle. Much of the film is set in the desert, where Will and his friends strive to design the perfect boat in a Utah aircraft hanger. These scenes, evocative of Ford's West, or of the crazy beatnik visionary seeking inspiration in the wilderness, have a resonance which the rest of the action lacks. Screenwriter Rudy Wurlitzer, whose credits include *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* and *Voyager*, explores the ambiguities in the make-up of the modern American hero, trying to give the film a social and political context in the process. As he notes, "part of the fabric of the film and the tension between the characters is the theme of class struggle between people who earn their money and people who inherit their money." He is helped by a typically quizzical leading performance from Matthew Modine, but is only fitfully successful: in the end, the characters' dilemmas, dreams and romances are secondary to the movie's main theme, which is to flaunt the Stars and Stripes, and to mark yet another sporting footnote in American history. Who cares where the money comes from as long as the America's Cup stays where it belongs?

Geoffrey Macnab

Wittgenstein

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Derek Jarman

Certificate

12
Distributor
 BH
Production Companies
 Channel 4/BFI
 In association with
 Uplink
 A Bandung production
Executive Producers
 Ben Gibson
 Takashi Asai
Executive in Charge
 of Production
 Eliza Mellor
Producer
 Tariq Ali
Associate Director
 Ken Butler
Production Managers
 Anna Campeau
 Gina Marsh
Assistant Directors
 Davina Nicholson
 Richard Hewitt
Screenplay
 Derek Jarman
 Terry Eagleton
 Ken Butler
Director of Photography
 James Welland
 In colour
Editor
 Budge Tremlett
Art Director
 Annie Lapaz
Scenic Artist
 Matthew Parsons
Musie
 Jan Latham-Koenig
Music performed by
 Piano:
 Jan Latham-Koenig
 Violin:
 Paul Barrett
 Flute:
 Judith Hall
Costume Design
 Sandy Powell
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Penny Beard
Mix-up
 Morag Ross
Sound Editor
 Toby Calder
Sound Recordists
 George Richards
Music:
 Andre Jacquemin
 Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordist
 Paul Carr

Cast

Karl Johnson
 Ludwig Wittgenstein
Michael Gough
 Bertrand Russell
Tilda Swinton
 Ottoline Morrell
John Quentin
 Maynard Keynes
Kevin Collins
 Johnny
Clancy Chassay
 Young Ludwig
Wittgenstein
Jill Balcon
 Leopoldine
Wittgenstein
Sally Dexter
 Hermine Wittgenstein
Gina Marsh
 Gretel Wittgenstein
Vanya del Borgo
 Helene Wittgenstein
Bon Scantlebury
 Hans Wittgenstein
Howard Sooly
 Kurt Wittgenstein
David Radziewicz
 Rudolf Wittgenstein
Jan Latham-Koenig
 Paul Wittgenstein
Tony Poole
 Michelle Wade
Tanya Wade
 Roger Cook
Anna Campen
Mike O'Pray
 Tutors
Nabil Shaban
 Martian
Donald McInnes
 Haidresser
Arling Magill
 Schoolgirl
Lyn Seymour
 Lydia Lopokova
Ashley Russell
 Stewart Bennett
David Mansell
 Steven Downes
Peter Fillingham
 Feyer Samara
 Students
Samantha Cones
 Kate Temple
Sarah Graham
 Cyclists
Layla Alexander Garrett
 Sophia Janovskaya
6,750 feet
75 minutes

loses an arm and Ludwig begins work on what will become the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. On returning home he decides to delay his return to Cambridge by taking up a provincial teaching post, further angering Hermine who insists that he is wasting his talents. Ludwig experiences the elementary school as deeply frustrating and is forced to leave after being accused of brutality towards his students.

His return to Cambridge is facilitated by the offer of a teaching post and a grant arranged by the Professor of Economics John Maynard Keynes. Wittgenstein, however, finds it frustratingly difficult to relate his ideas to his students, and seeks solace in daily visits to the local cinema. He is accompanied by his friend Johnny, a young philosophy student who is also Maynard Keynes' lover. Wittgenstein and Johnny begin a relationship, during which the philosopher attempts to persuade the student to relinquish his studies in favour of the more 'honest' world of manual labour. Russell and Keynes reprimand him for influencing a young man whose working-class background meant that his parents underwent great sacrifices to educate their son at Cambridge. Wittgenstein attempts to leave Cambridge to work as a factory labourer in Soviet Russia, but the Soviet authorities offer him instead a choice of two University posts. He returns to Cambridge in 1951 where he is diagnosed as suffering from cancer of the prostate. After a last voyage, this time to Ireland, he returns to Cambridge to die, where he is attended at his deathbed by Maynard Keynes and the Martian.

Originally conceived as part of a Channel Four series on philosophers to include films on Spinoza and Locke, *Wittgenstein* - shot in two weeks and for less than £300,000 - takes Jarman's characteristic exquisite minimalism to a new extreme. The already reduced *mise en scène* of *Edward II* is here further contracted to a series of lush colour tableaux on a depthless pitch-black background.

This refusal of depth and, by consequence, of any realist visual perspective, while making a telling virtue of economic necessity, is a visual strategy in keeping with the film's agenda. For it becomes increasingly clear that at one prominent level *Wittgenstein* is a disquisition on the futility of dramatizing the life behind the work, an extended Brechtian parody of biopic conventions.

The insistent dedramatization comes across particularly in the film's use of spare sets and anti-realistic costumes, a single prop becoming the motif of a particular period or place. Vienna becomes a group portrait around a grand piano; and Cambridge a group of students seated in deckchairs around a blackboard - English gentlemen-philosophers sunning themselves in the light of the imported *mittel-European* eccentric. This latter-day Brechtianism might also derive from the fact that the film's first draft

was the work of Marxist academic Terry Eagleton. In studiously distancing itself from the Minnelli/Van Gogh paradigm of the biopic (attempting at all costs to avoid becoming *Lust for Logic*), *Wittgenstein* toys with the standard characterization of the Genius as Romantic Outsider, personally and professionally misunderstood, and identifies melancholia and torment as the wellsprings of creativity.

Actors 'quote' their parts: Bertrand Russell played as an amiable lounge-lizard academic. Maynard Keynes as a stiff-spined manipulator of the Old Boys Network and Lady Ottoline Morrell as brittle, charming bitch aristocrats all. But the holding of the biopic tendencies at arm's length results in a curious lack of conviction. This conflict of formal strategy and latent content is particularly emphasised by moments when the starkness works towards either a visually expressive effect - the retreat to Norway given with beautiful economy, a single lantern and a dappling light on the boat; or to accentuate a character trait - Ludwig's disastrous spell as a teacher at a provincial Austrian primary school, when the camera closes in on the faces of the impotently raging teacher and his terrified pupil. The fact that this sequence returns as the single flashback in the film, to accompany the philosopher's repeated, agonised refrain of "Do you understand me?", is an internal recognition that it packs the film's only powerfully dramatic punch.

Wittgenstein also represents a continuation of Jarman's highly personal Grand Tour through the mausoleum of European High Culture. But whether the cultural model is literary (Shakespeare, Marlowe), painterly (Caravaggio) or philosophical, Jarman's fascination remains in his isolating and reinterpreting the marginal inscriptions of class and sexuality in culture. *Wittgenstein*, while something of a curio, is a further development of this sustained cinematic reading of cultural history 'against the grain'. The film's central thesis concerns the philosopher's masochistic faith in material reality, in the 'everyday' as superior to "the poison of the mind" that his philosophical vocation repre-

sents and this is investigated partly through his sexuality, but largely through class.

Surprisingly, Jarman never really exploits the visual possibilities of the engineer-turned-philosopher's artisanal activities, which included building two houses. These adventures, as well as his Tolstoyesque communions with nature, his mistaken attempt to defect to Soviet Russia and his enlistment in World War I, are presented as acts of classic bourgeois bad faith, arising from a sense of class shame. He is accused of such by both Maynard Keynes and Russell, who are presented as comfortably socially integrated. This complex of issues crystallises around the character of Johnny, a rough-trade cipher and the lover of both Maynard Keynes and Wittgenstein. The philosopher's repeated attempts to dissuade Johnny from continuing his studies in favour of the more "authentic" life of manual work provokes both Keynes and Russell, who justify their angry disagreement in the name of the sacrifices of Johnny's working-class family. That the philosopher is simply unable to comprehend this argument demonstrates the extent to which each of the three characters regard Johnny as a *tabula rasa*: Keynes and Russell projecting onto him their own feelings and attitudes of, respectively, desire and paternalist patronage: Wittgenstein affectionately incorporating the young man into his own schema of self-hate and self-delusion.

The irony that the film constantly points up is that Wittgenstein's philosophical brilliance (the maxims here are deliberately tossed about like so many after-dinner *bons mots*) is less a condition of his acceptance in Cambridge than the tacit understanding that he is - however much he kicks against it - of the same class as Russell and Keynes. At the philosopher's deathbed, Keynes offers a poetic homily that collapses the contradictions of his character into two elemental images: Wittgenstein as constantly pulled between "the ice world" of logic and "the earth" of material reality. Abetted by its own icy formalism, the film never really touches the earth of its character.

Chris Clarke



Ludwig's Roman follies: Clancy Chassay

The young Ludwig Wittgenstein, announcing himself as "a prodigy", introduces us to his Viennese family, describes the rigours of his Austrian education, and debates philosophical questions with a Martian. His intellectual talents take him initially to England where, at Manchester University, he studies Engineering. He quickly transfers to Philosophy at Cambridge, where he is befriended and encouraged in his radically original philosophical ideas by Bertrand Russell who, writing to his mistress Lady Ottoline Morrell, proclaims him the most gifted philosopher of his generation.

Wittgenstein leaves Cambridge to journey first to Norway where, in seclusion, he begins to write his *Notes on Logic*, then back to Austria, where he informs his family he intends to volunteer for the army. His sister Hermine regards the decision as stupid; his brother Paul is encouraged to join up with him. During World War I, Paul

RE-RELEASE

Mean Streets

USA 1973

Director: Martin Scorsese

Certificates
18
Distributor
Electric
Production Company
Warner Bros
A Taplin-Perry-Scorsese production
Executive Producer
E. Lee Perry
Producers
Jonathan T. Taplin
Production Co-ordinators
Peter Fain
2nd Unit
David Osterhout
Production Manager
Paul Rapp
Post-production
Co-ordinator
Sandra Weintraub
Assistant Directors
Russell Vreeland
Ron Satooff
Screenplay
Martin Scorsese
Mardik Martin
Story
Martin Scorsese
Director of Photography
Kent Wakeford
Colour
Technicolor
Additional Photography
Norman Gurard
Camera Operator
Gene Talvin
Editor
Sid Levin
Visual Consultant
David Nichols
Special Effects
Bill Bates
Music/Song
"Jumpin' Jack Flash",
"Tell Me (You're Coming Back)" by Mick Jagger,
Keith Richards,
performed by the Rolling
Stones; "I Love You So"
by Sonny Norton, Morris
Leavy, performed by The
Chantells; "Addio sogni
di gloria" by Carlos
Innocenzi, Marcello Rivi,
"Canta per me" by
Ernesto de Curtis, Libero
Borio, "Munasteria di
Santa Chiara" by Alberto
Barberis, Michel Galdieri,
performed by Giuseppe
de Stefano; "Marruzella"
by Renato Carosone,
Enzo Bonagura,
"Scappicciatello" by
Ferdinando Albano,
Pacifico Vento performed
by Renato Carosone;
"Please Mr Postman"
by W. Garrett,
G. Dobbins, F. Gorman,
B. Bert, performed
by The Marvelettes;
"Hideway" by Freddie
King, Sonny Thompson,
"I Looked Away" by Eric
Clapton, Bobby Whitlock,
performed by Eric
Clapton; "Desiree"
by Nick Curinga,
Leslie Cooper, Clarence
Johnson, performed
by The Chants; "Rubber
Biscuit" by Charles
Johnson, performed
by The Chants;
"Pledging My Love"
by Don D. Robey,
Ferdinand Washington,
performed by Johnny
Ace; "Ritmo Sabroso"
by Ray Barretto, Louis
Ramirez, performed
by Ray Barretto; "You"
by Dave Goddard, Larry
Vannata performed
by The Aquatones; "Ship
of Love" by Leroy Griffin,
performed by The
Nutmegs; "Florence"
by Paul Winley, Julius
McMichael, performed
by The Paragons;
"Malafermina" by Tolo,
performed by Jimmy
Roselli, "Those Oldies
But Goodies" by Nick
Curinga, Paul Pollit,

1973, Little Italy. Tony throws a drug addict out of his bar, Michael oversees the importation of unlicensed foreign goods, Johnny Boy throws firecrackers into mail boxes and Charlie considers his personal morality in church. In Tony's bar, Charlie remonstrates with Johnny Boy about his debts; later Charlie assures Michael that Johnny Boy will pay up. Charlie visits Oscar's restaurant and reports back to Giovanni, his powerful mobster uncle, that Oscar is unable to make his payments. The next day, at the bar, Tony rows with Johnny Boy. After peace is restored by Charlie, a young man shoots a drunk in the toilet. Michael, Johnny Boy and Charlie drive away from the incident before the police arrive. Johnny Boy and Charlie return to Charlie's place where the latter fantasises about Johnny Boy's cousin Teresa, with whom he is having a clandestine affair. Later, at Giovanni's, Charlie overhears a conversation between him and the father of the boy involved in the shooting incident. Charlie goes with Teresa to the coast and tries to explain why he always helps Johnny Boy out.

In the bar Charlie makes a date with Diane, a black dancer, but is too concerned about his position in the Italian community to keep it. At Oscar's restaurant, which is being handed over to Charlie, Giovanni warns him to keep away from Johnny Boy and from Teresa, who is epileptic. Back home, Charlie tries unsuccessfully to back out of his relationship with her. Later, while talking with his uncle, Charlie is interrupted by Michael, who has had enough of Johnny Boy's irresponsible behaviour. Charlie reassures him, and they agree to meet later and put pressure on Johnny Boy. At a party at Tony's bar to celebrate a friend's homecoming from Vietnam, Charlie gets drunk but is sobered up by Michael's threats to teach Johnny Boy a lesson. Teresa arrives to let Charlie know that Johnny Boy is on the roof of an adjacent building with a gun. Charlie takes the gun from him and they cool off in a nearby cemetery. Michael harasses Teresa about Johnny Boy and she and Charlie talk it over. Johnny Boy sees them together and fights with Charlie, which causes Teresa to have a fit. Charlie and Johnny Boy are reconciled, but Charlie refuses to talk to his uncle on Johnny Boy's behalf. In Tony's bar, Charlie and Johnny Boy meet Michael; Johnny Boy is abusive and pulls a gun on him. Charlie borrows Tony's car to take Johnny Boy away from the heat for a few days. On the way he picks up Teresa and the three get hopelessly lost trying to exit New York. Michael catches up with them and his hired thug shoots them all. Charlie and Teresa are helped into an ambulance while Johnny Boy collapses, fatally wounded in the neck.

So much has been written about *Mean Streets* since its release that the task of reviewing is not easy. The celebrated use of hand-held cam-

era in tracking shots - especially during the bar brawl; the integration of the music score with the lives of the characters; the naturalistic style; the *tour de force* acting; comparisons with *The Godfather*; the vigour of the direction; the use of quotation - all have been exhaustively commented on. *Mean Streets* does not need to be reassessed in these terms - its pivotal place in movie history is guaranteed. And, as if by design, the re-release of Scorsese's movie has coincided with the UK release of *Reservoir Dogs*, inevitably inviting comparison (not good for *Reservoir Dogs*). The heavy-handed way in which Tarantino deals with the subjects of racism, loyalty and friendship makes *Reservoir Dogs* appear ponderous, whereas the violence seeping through *Mean Streets* renders it at once more threatening and more watchable than the in-the-face style of its 1993 counterpart.

But these metacinematic discussions often leave the film itself behind. Watching *Mean Streets* again, I enjoyed it more than when I first saw it. I was struck by its warmth and watched indulgently as the boys brawled, got drunk, sparred with each other and generally got up to no good. Those streets are not so mean, and even the ending comes across almost like a prank gone wrong. But, as with all Scorsese movies, that's not the end of it. The characterisation is complex, centring on the character of Charlie (Harvey Keitel) who is struggling semi-articulate with the conflicting codes of church, Mafia and friendship/love. His desire to 'help' Johnny Boy may be motivated by friendship, it may be a Christian act, but it may also be that Charlie wants to act out the Godfather role for which he so ardently admires his uncle Giovanni.

This is the central trilemma which brings about Johnny Boy's breakdown - for that is what it is - and which Charlie finally fails to resolve. It is Scorsese's master stroke that he takes us through the movie with Charlie, never outside or against him, by means of close-up shots of Keitel's wide-eyed, innocent features. In his later films, especially *GoodFellas*, the moral confusion is still there, but Scorsese has stepped back from it, perhaps tired of its irresolvable nature. This makes the later movies colder and less appealing; the difference is that of being inside or outside a dream.

20 years on, in a new 35mm print, *Mean Streets* still has the power to disturb and move. There can be few moments in movie history more thrilling than when the Ronettes break into "Be My Baby" as Keitel wakes up, shakes off his Catholic guilt and dresses for the day. By the time the Rolling Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash" is heard, as the camera winds towards Charlie sitting at the end of Tony's infernal bar, the headiness is as intense as any artificial high. From its opening sequences, *Mean Streets* creates a buzz which takes you up and never sets you down.

Jim McGreal

Shorts

The Attendant

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Isaac Julien

Certificates
Not yet issued
Distributor
BFI
Production Company
A Normal production
for
Channel 4
Producer
Mark Nash
Production Manager
Esther Johnson
Assistant Directors
Orson Nava
Johann Insanally
Director of Photography
Nina Keilgren
In colour & B/W
Editors
Robert Hargreaves
James Bygrave
Production Designer
Mick Hurd
Storyboard Artist
John Hewitt
Music
Gary Butcher
Jimmy Somerville
Costume Design
Annie Curtis Jones
Make-up
Tammy Harewood
Sound Design
Trevor Mathison
Edward George
Sound Re-recording
Raja Sehgal
Music Consultant
Johnny T

Cast
Thomas Baptiste
Attendant
Cleo Sylvestre
Conservator
John Wilson
Visitor
Paul Gornbach
Roy Brown
Andy Denny
Stuart Hall
Hugo Irwin
Christian Jones
Daigian Kavame
Hunt Harrold
Edward Lam
Keith Lemon
Mike Phillips
Norman Rosenthal
Justin Saunders
Thelma Speirs
Neal Wiseman
Players
Timothée Siggs
Sebastian Fenton
Johnny T
Shirley Thompson
Quartet

640 feet
8 minutes

The camera pans in on a nineteenth-century painting of black slaves in chains, 'Scene on the Coast of Africa'. In a museum, the Attendant inspects a visitor's bag; the Attendant is then seen on a stage singing; black and white men are seen in an erotic cabaret and a woman slowly claps her gloved hands. A male visitor in leather enters, carrying a black leather bag; he smiles at the Attendant; an angel in leather shorts flies out and circles his head. The Attendant smiles back and an angel in white circles his head.

The visitors leave the museum, except for the man in leather, who smiles at the image of a man's crotch in gold shorts. The painting of the slaves comes alive with men in an SM scene; they turn to look as the Attendant walks by. The next painting shows four men in a similar scene with the Visitor at the centre, holding a riding crop. The Attendant is seen face down, with the visitor standing over him holding a whip. A female Conservator puts her ear to the wall and hears a gay porn soundtrack. The Visitor lies face down, with the Attendant holding the whip. The Attendant descends the stairs and kisses the Conservator. The camera returns to the erotic tableau seen previously; angels fly around the theatre; and the film ends with a close-up of the black man in the centre of the tableau.

A far cry from the earnest proselytising of *Young Soul Rebels*, the *Attendant* could be seen as marking Isaac Julien's late entry into the New Queer Cinema club. Poignantly explor-

ing the power of the erotic imagination, it displays as much wit, style and perversity in its "queer eight minutes" as you're likely to find in the existing queer canon.

While the white boys are looking to make a virtue out of sexual outlawry, Julien takes a more cautious view of transgressive sexuality, focussing on the rituals of gay sado-masochism as seen from a black perspective. While there is enormous pleasure to be derived from the narrative ploy whereby images of 'deviant' sexuality come to life (a joke at the expense of right-wing politicians who express fears over Mapplethorpe's "dangerous" representations, perhaps?), the images themselves provoke a different set of anxieties. If the museum setting provides a suitably seasoned environment for the staging of sado-masochistic rituals, it also implies a discomfiting historical background to these particular power-plays. As much as we might want to forget it, the original painting of black slaves in chains echoes throughout the film. The choice of drawings in the hyper-macho style of artist Tom of Finland as backdrops to the Attendant's fantasies only serves to underline the director's ambivalence; as Julien has pointed out previously, he is not, nor is he likely ever to be, one of "Tom's men".

For all the queer fun and trouble it has to offer, *The Attendant* is still a soberly 'difficult' film. Insofar as a passion for historical revisionism can be judged a true test of New Queer Cinema, Julien lets us know that he's only queer by half. Some histories are simply a lot harder to revise than others.

Paul Burston

Now That It's Morning

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Neil Bartlett

Certificate
Not yet issued

Distributor
ICA

Production Company
Esa's Television Company

In association with
Gloria

British Screen Channel 4

Producers
Esa Charkham
Simon Mellor

Production Manager
Jim Allan

Castling
Sue Needleman

Assistant Directors
Jon Older
Simon Haveland

Screenplay
Neil Bartlett

Director of Photography
Nina Kellgren

Colour
Technicolor

Editor
Alan Knight

Production Designer
Ken Sharp

Song
"Now That It's Morning" by Nicolas Bloomfield, Neil Bartlett, performed by Sonia Jones

Costume Design
James Gardiner

Wardrobe
Gilly Hebdon

Make-up
Teresa Kelly

Titles
Plume Partners

Sound Editor
Patrick O'Neil

Sound Recordists
Steve Phillips
Richard King

Cast
Malcolm Sinclair
Gerald
Nicholas Pickard
Ian
Tritram Joimek
Maitre D'
Edward Whitbert
Binky
Nicolas Bloomfield
Bunny
Miss Regina Fong
Drag Queen

996 feet
11 minutes

18 November 1961. The clock strikes 8 a.m. as 15-year-old Ian picks up the telephone to wish his



Twang! Christian Jones in 'The Attendant'

lover Gerald a happy birthday. Gerald tells him that he has arranged a surprise and will pick Ian up from school late in the afternoon; Gerald is keen to show off his young lover in his brand new Jaguar.

From the school grounds, Gerald whisks Ian off to Chez Maurice, a private club where a *soirée* is in progress celebrating Gerald's forty-fifth birthday. Upstairs, the Maitre D' wishes Gerald a happy birthday and frostily greets the under-aged Ian. None of Gerald's friends have met his teenaged lover. As the besuited Bunny and Binky whisper disapprovingly to each other, Gerald becomes reckless in his cups and to stave off further damage, the owner calls drag artist Miss Regina Fong out for her number.

But Miss Fong's rendition of the song 'Now That It's Morning' is interrupted by Gerald who, determined to answer the gossip, introduces Ian to the party, sets them right about the age difference, and then accidentally cuts his hand. The party, as the Maitre D' announces, is over and Regina, Ian and Gerald flee Chez Maurice in the Jaguar. Ian drives through the night to Brighton where the three watch the dawn rise in a roadside cafe. Regina coaxes Ian in to declaring his love for Gerald as she plays the title song from the juke-box and the lovers enfold each other in a romantic embrace.

Until Queer Cinema signalled the arrival of a new cinematic language to express gay romance, filmmakers had often struggled with love stories mired in kitsch or frayed with self-hatred. Neil Bartlett's *Now That It's Morning* is an intriguing example of how well-worn scenarios can be rewritten to describe Queer emotions. In this case, Bartlett focuses on the tortured relationship between a closeted middle-aged businessman and his pubescent boyfriend. He recreates a pre-Wolfenden London where gay men congregate in claustrophobic 'private' clubs but never dream of kissing in public, and sets it against a determinedly happy ending.

The danger involved in their relationship is explicit from the start: their conversation is conducted *sotto voce* so that Ian's parents won't overhear them. A series of tight close-ups of Ian getting

ready for school, the telephone and a pocket watch underscores the difficulty of the lovers' situation. Even at school, Ian looks on Gerald's spanking new Jaguar with anxiety and delight. To be seen together so publicly is a daring, even criminal act.

At Chez Maurice, the wine-red curtains, baroque flower bouquets and dim lighting suggest a virtual closet where Gerald's closest friends pass bitchy comments on his relationship. "He's very, very dear but seen from the outside," whispers Binky, "one might get the wrong impression." These snippets are a terse reminder of the overwrought envy directed at those who flaunted rigid sexual conventions. The Maitre D's barely contained scorn erupts into full-coloured bile when Gerald cuts his hand, signalling the end to a tense, edgy scene.

However, drag artist Miss Regina Fong, in flame-coloured gown and matching wig, represents the catalyst for change and flight from the pink prison. Defying the party guests, she encourages Ian and Gerald to dance, openly acknowledging their relationship. Among the be-suited and bow-tied guests, Miss Fong's lip-synched performance of Nicholas Bloomfield's title song signals a further disruption of acceptable behaviour.

It's Miss Fong's outrageousness which inspires the couple's release. Outside the club, she flings the Jaguar's car keys into Ian's hands, warning that "Jennifer Justice" is just round the corner, as the three take off into the night. Like a road movie in miniature, the drive into the dawn signals promise, as orchestral music accompanies shots of the trio laughing, trading cigarettes and arguing over directions. At the conveniently empty roadside cafe, Miss Fong again plays matchmaker, reinterpreting romance for the lovers in her charge. "Tell that you love him," she admonishes Ian, and pointing a glossy fingernail at him, calls "Lights, action". And here again, Bartlett wisely opts for music rather than dialogue. Watching Ian gently kiss his lover's hands is both moving and a lyrical rewriting of a classic filmic gesture. For a short film, Bartlett has created a compelling fantasy from an arid period.

Julie Wheelwright

Orlando

In the last issue we printed a set of credits for the film *Orlando*, which were compiled from a number of sources. Since then, Adventure Pictures have provided a definitive set of credits. We are therefore now reprinting the technical credits for the film.

United Kingdom 1992
Director: Sally Potter
Certificate
15

Distributor
Electric Pictures

Production Company
Adventure Pictures
(Orlando) Ltd

In association with
Lenfilm (St Petersburg)
Rio (Paris)
Mikado Film (Rome)
Sigma Filmproductions (Maastricht)

With the participation of
British Screen
Made with the assistance of the European Co-production Fund (UK)
Developed with the support of The European Script Fund/The National Development Fund

Producer
Christopher Sheppard

Co-producers
Roberto Cluitin
Jean Gontier
Matthijs Van Heijningen
Luigi Musini
Vitaly Sobolev

Line Producer
Laurie Borg

Associate Producers
Lynda Hanke
Richard Salmon
Martine Kelly

Production Executives
Anna Vronskaya
Linda Bruce

Production Associate
Kassia Zaimir Goffa

Production Supervisor
Holland
George Buddenberg

Production Co-ordinators
Jonathan Finn
Kassia Zaimir Goffa
Natalia Tokarskikh

Production Manager
St Petersburg: Yuri Glatov

Head of Production
Uzbekistan: Radjabov Muhamedjan

Location Manager
Tony Clarkson

Castling
Irene Lamb
St Petersburg: Lyubov Vlasenko

Assistant Directors
Chris Newman
Simon Moxley
Christina McWilliams
St Petersburg: Yuri Vertlib
Sasha Yarchikov
Gabrielle Vornobiev
Uzbekistan: Kikhsvoj
Abdukhovich

Screenplay
Sally Potter

Story Editor
Walter Donohue
Based on the novel by Virginia Woolf

Director of Photography
Alexei Rodimov
Eastman colour

Editor
Herve Schneid

Production Designers
Ben Van Os
Jan Roelfs

Art Directors
Michael Buchanan
Michael Howells
St Petersburg: Stanislav Romanovsky
Uzbekistan: Igor Gulyenko

Set Design
Russia
Christopher Hobbs

Set Dressers
Constance de Vos
Floris Vos
Uzbekistan: Rashid Sharafutdinov
Feodor Shakhmedov
R. Majesnyuz

Scenic Artist
Todd van Hulzen

Special Effects Directors
St Petersburg: Yuri Borovkov
Viktor Okovityev

Special Effects
Effects Associates

Pyrotechnics
St Petersburg: Sergei Maslov
Uzbekistan: Nikolai Borisov
Aleksandr Pantushin

Music
David Motion
Sally Potter
Additional: Fred Frith
David Bedford

Music Performed by
Contra-bass Clarinet: Richard Addison
Violin/Viola: Alexander Balanescu
Viola: Clara Connors
Bassoon: Lindsay Cooper
Clarinet/Saxophone: Andy Fendon
Guitars: Fred Frith
Double Bass: Christopher Laurence
Keyboards: David Motion
Trumpets/Flugel Horn: Bruce Nockles
Voices: Sally Potter
Jimmy Somerville

Music Producers
Bob Last
David Motion

Music Supervisor
Bob Last

Songs
"Eliza Is the Fairest Queen" by Edward Johnson, "I Am Conting" by Sally Potter, Jimmy Somerville, David Motion, performed by Jimmy Somerville, "Where've You Walk" by George Frideric Handel, performed by Andrew Watts, Peter Hayward

Choreographer
Jacky Lansley

Costume Design
Sandy Powell

Additional:
Dien Van Straalen

Costume Supervisors
Paul Minier
Uzbekistan: Zibo Nasstrava

Wardrobe
Supervisor: Clare Spragg
St Petersburg: Ludmila Romanovskaya

Make-up
Supervisor: Morag Ross
St Petersburg: Tamara Fried

Hair Supervisor
Jan Archibald

Titles
Frameline

Supervising Sound Editor
Kant Pan

Sound Editor
Dialogue: Martin Evans

Sound Re-recorder
Jean-Louis Dussanne
Foley: Martyn Robinson
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recorder
Rebin O'Donoghue

Foley Artists
Dianne Graves
Jack Stew
Pauline Bennett

Stunt Co-ordinators
Steve Dent
St Petersburg: Oleg Vasilug

Corrections to cast credits:
John Bolt
(Orlando's Father) should read John Bott
Mary Macleod
(First Woman) should read Mary Macleod
John Byrne should be deleted from cast

VIDEO

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and laser discs, and Peter Dean new retail videos

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* (MFB) and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will simply be listed and the film review reference given in parentheses

Rental

Book of Love

USA 1990/Columbia TriStar CVT 11618
Certificate 15 Director Robert Shaye
New Line Cinema kingpin Shaye turns his hand to directing with pleasantly schmaltzy results. A young boy and his pals learn about love and life during the 50s from TV, movies and rock 'n' roll. (S&S July 1992)

The Bridge

UK 1990/Columbia TriStar CVT 17279
Certificate 15 Director Sydney Macartney
A beautifully mounted adaptation of Maggie Hemingway's novel of love and social ritual, inspired by the work of Impressionist painter Wilson Steer. (S&S January 1992)

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1972
Certificate PG Director Fran Rubel Kuzui
An air-headed Californian teenager (Kristy Swanson) learns from a mysterious admirer (Donald Sutherland) that she is next in a long line of vampire slayers. Insubstantial, but some nice one-liners ("Does Elvis talk to you?"). (S&S November 1992)

California Man

USA 1992/Buena Vista D 913832
Certificate PG Director Les Mayfield
Limp but not unlikeable comedy about two high school kids who accidentally dig up a frozen caveman who they then pass off as an Estonian exchange student. (S&S October 1992)

Carry On Columbus

UK 1992/Warner PEV 35579
Certificate PG Director Gerald Thomas
Unfunny resurrection of the deceased *Carry On* cycle, starring a brace of 'alternative' comedians (Rik Mayall, Alexei Sayle, Julian Clary) to augment the depleted original cast. Bring back Sid James! (S&S October 1992)

Cool World

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2625
Certificate 15 Director Ralph Bakshi
From the creator of *Fritz the Cat*, this surrealistic romp about a sultry cartoon heroine (Kim Basinger) who forces her way into the real world fails to live up to expectations. Poor animation/live-action matching and an uninspired plot. (S&S January 1992)

1492: Conquest of Paradise

USA 1992/Guild 8701
Certificate 15 Director Ridley Scott
Scott's good-looking epic boasts an intelligent script and a magnificent performance by Gérard Depardieu as Columbus. Unfortunately the hi-tech gloss obscures the plot. Also available in widescreen. (S&S November 1992)

Housesitter

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1591
Certificate PG Director Frank Oz

A feisty waitress (Goldie Hawn) transforms the life of a jilted architect (Steve Martin) when she moves into his dream house. Flimsy, episodic comedy from the sporadically talented Frank Oz. (S&S September 1992)

Knight Moves

USA/Germany 1992/
Columbia TriStar CVT 13298
Certificate 18 Director Carl Schenkel
Murder, lust and chess in a dull thriller set against the backdrop of international chess championships. Less checkmate than stale, mate. (S&S October 1992)

A League of Their Own

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 14589
Certificate PG Director Penny Marshall
Unashamedly sentimental female buddy movie, entertaining despite its lack of coherence. Glamorous women are recruited to play baseball while their men are away fighting World War II. Geena Davis steals the show. (S&S November 1992)

The Long Day Closes

UK 1992/Curzon CV 0012
Certificate PG Director Terence Davies
A magical cinematic memory of a childhood in 50s Liverpool, Davies' follow-up to *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* lacks its predecessor's narrative strength but exceeds it in visual panache. (S&S June 1992)

Straight Out of Brooklyn

USA 1991/Artificial Eye ART 904

Certificate 15 Director Matty Rich



Attitude: 'Straight Out of Brooklyn'

An impressive directorial debut for Rich, unflinchingly depicting the hardships of ghetto life. The portrayal of an oppressive milieu is excellent and makes up for any slackness in the narrative. (S&S October 1992)

Waterland

UK 1992/Polygram PG 1001
Certificate 15 Director Stephen Gyllenhaal
Beautiful adaptation of Graham Swift's harrowing novel about twisted family ties transferred from the eerie environs of the Fens to the US. Jeremy Irons, Sinead Cusack and Ethan Hawke lead the excellent cast. (S&S September 1992)

Rental Premiere

American Samurai

USA 1992/Warner PEV 32034
Certificate 18 Director Sam Firstenberg
Producer Allan Greenblatt Screenplay John Corcoran Lead Actors David Bradley, Mark Dacascos, Valerie Trapp 87 minutes
Martial arts vehicle with an emphasis on impressively choreographed samurai sword action. An abducted journalist is forced to compete with his estranged brother in a deadly game of "live blade".

Angel Street

USA 1992/Warner PEV 12688
Certificate PG Director Rod Holcomb
Producer Ken Swor Screenplay John Wells
Lead Actors Robin Givens, Pamela Gidley 90 minutes
Promising and enjoyable pilot for a projected TV cop show, teaming a working-class white policewoman with an upper-class black woman detective. Gidley and Givens are great.

Baby on Board

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20180
Certificate PG Director Francis A. Schaeffer
Producer Damian Lee Screenplay Damian Lee, James Shavick Lead Actors Judge Reinhold, Carole Kane, Alex Stapley, Holly Stapley 88 minutes
A New York cabbie unwittingly becomes a chauffeur for a distraught widow on the run from the mafia with her baby daughter. Disposable, formulaic comedy.

Beach Beverly Hills

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 19817
Certificate 18 Director Jonathan Sarno
Producers/Screenplay Gloria Pryor, Jonathan Sarno Lead Actors Gloria Pryor, Heather Ann McTague, Lynette Howe, George Saunders 100 minutes
Soft-core drama, loosely based on the Monroe classic *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Three models shed their clothes in order to attract wealthy men. Very dull.

Bingo

USA 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 12841
Certificate PG Director Matthew Robbins
Producer Thomas Baer Screenplay Jim Strain Lead Actors Cindy Williams, David Rasche, Robert J. Steinmiller Jr 86 minutes
A kids' comedy lacking in invention and loaded with schmaltz. A loyal dog traces his schoolboy owner across country to his new home.

Body Language

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2695
Certificate PG Director Arthur Allan Seidelman Producer Robert M. Rolsky Screenplay Dan Gurskis, Brian Ross Lead Actors Heather Locklear, Linda Purl, James Acheson, Edward Albert 89 minutes
A shameless *Single White Female* rip-off, this made-for-TV thriller finds a glamorous career woman haunted by a psychotically jealous secretary.

The Broken Cord

USA 1991/CIC Video VHA 1595
Certificate PG Director Ken Olin Producer Alan Barnette Screenplay Ann Beckett Lead Actors Kim Delaney, Michael Spears, Fredrick Leader-Charge 100 minutes
A nauseating true-life TV drama about fetal alcohol syndrome. Jimmy Smits agonises over the retardation of his adopted Native American son.

Burford's Beach Bunnies

USA 1992/
Imperial Entertainment (IMP 118
Certificate 18 Director Mark Pirro Producer Andrew Garroni Screenplay Mark Pirro, Alan Griess, Robyn Sullivan Lead Actors Jim Hanks, Rikki Brand, Monique Parent, Amy Page 102 minutes
A selection of scantily-clad 'babes' attempt to seduce a woman-shy heir (Tom Hanks' brother Jim) to win a million dollar reward. Limp bawdy comedy.

Brad Stevens on 'Zéro de conduite' and how 'art films' fare on video

A cutting art

Jean Vigo's distinctive qualities gained him few admirers during his regrettably brief lifetime. The response of the prestigious critic of *Le Journal* to Vigo's *L'Atalante* is typical: "[the film] gives the impression of being the work of an amateur... the story is awkwardly told and the visual quality one expects from a director is not well presented." Similar charges of amateurism were to haunt Vigo's work for many years, though by the time *Zéro de conduite* was widely shown in 1945 (after being banned for 12 years), opinions were becoming more favourable, with one writer finding the film merely "almost amateurish" and another calling Vigo "an amateur of genius". Rehabilitation did not arrive until the emergence of the directors of the French *nouvelle vague*, who adopted Vigo as a spiritual godfather. And today the director's reputation stands higher than ever, with *L'Atalante* winning a place as one of the top ten films of all time in the recent *Sight and Sound* poll.

This is partly due to the fact that the prints to which we now have access are vastly superior to those seen by early audiences. *L'Atalante*, for instance, was lovingly restored in 1990 by Pierre Philippe and Jean-Louis Bompont to as near to Vigo's original conception as possible. For me, however, Vigo's masterpiece remains *Zéro de conduite* - recently released in an uncut form by Artificial Eye.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of *Zéro de conduite* is that it represents one of the first examples of that nostalgia for the silent cinema that was to link filmmakers as diverse as Charles Laughton, Wim Wenders (the silent film show put on by the two men in *Kings of the Road*: the cinematic toys in *The American Friend*), Orson Welles (the iris-out in *The Magnificent Ambersons*) and Francis Ford Coppola (the cinematograph in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*; the much derided Griffithian pastry-making in *The Godfather Part III*). In *Zéro de conduite* silent cinema is evoked in the silent opening sequence of the two boys on the train who try to



Jean Vigo's 'L'Atalante': the work of an amateur genius?

outdo each other with a series of increasingly spectacular tricks, as well as when the most sympathetic of the teachers Huguet imitates Chaplin, and Caussat makes a ball disappear and reappear in true Méliès fashion. But primarily it is the tone of the film, made just four years after the coming of sound, that suggests a nostalgia for a more innocent cinema, the cinema of childhood, already irretrievably lost.

According to Artificial Eye, the new video is made up of a print of the film restored for a recent cinema release, together with additional footage supplied by the BBC. But when I compared the new video with the version screened on BBC2 in 1991, I found that it contained five seconds of material that had been cut for the BBC print. At the moment when the pillow fight in the dormitory goes into slow motion, we see a shot of a boy somersaulting backwards into a chair. At the beginning of the next shot his penis is clearly visible. The BBC print clumsily truncates this scene, starting the shot after the boy has been carried out of frame (the music on the video has also been slightly altered, presumably to accommodate the extra footage). The subtitles on both versions are identical.

right down to the absurd translation of "Je vous dis merde" as "Bugger off".

That subtitles are no longer seen as the kiss of death for a video release, at least as far as sell-through titles are concerned, is a welcome sign (though the recent downmarket rental release of Wenders' *Until the End of the World* simply omits them, with the result that large chunks of the video play in unsubtitled French). And the problems of cutting or panning and scanning, so common in mainstream releases, rarely arise in the films issued by the recently established art-house labels - though the BBFC ordered a shot of a horse falling off a stairway to be cut from Artificial Eye's tape of Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev*, despite the fact that BBC2 had already shown the film uncut, while Connoisseur Video has released Tati's *Mon Oncle* in a cut English-language version and Welles' *Confidential Report* in its European print, rather than the longer and more complexly edited US version called *Mr Arkadin*.

Yet the choice of films released by art-house companies still seems wilfully bizarre. If you should feel the need to own copies of the complete works of Jean-Jacques Beineix and Eric Rochant, you will be all right. But if you would prefer to purchase Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*, Bresson's *Pickpocket*, Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*, Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, Ophüls' *Lola Montes*, Godard's *Breathless*, Bergman's *Persona*, Visconti's *The Leopard*, Bertolucci's *The Conformist*, or anything at all by Antonioni, Dreyer, Melville, Mizoguchi, Ozu or Rossellini, you may be disappointed. (And why didn't Artificial Eye take the opportunity of accompanying *Zéro de conduite*, running at 41 mins. 40 secs. with Vigo's other two shorts: *A propos de Nice* and *Paris*?)

Clearly these are early days, and one does not wish to appear ungrateful or to ignore the very real problems involved in obtaining rights. Some of the above titles have already been scheduled, but when will one of the art-house labels take the plunge and release, say, all the surviving Mizoguchi films, from the earliest onwards? Surely if it's good enough for *Star Trek*, it should be good enough for the director who was once called "the Shakespeare of the cinema".

Comrades of Summer

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVT 19744

Certificate 15 Director Tommy Lee Wallace
Producers Tim Braine, David Pritchard
Screenplay Robert Rodat Lead Actors Joe Mantegna, Natalya Negodo, Michael Lerner, Mark Rolston 108 minutes

An injured American baseball star coaches Russia's first national team and challenges his old stateside comrades. A sporadically entertaining comedy, lifted by the presence of Mantegna and Lerner.

Crazy in Love

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20182

Certificate PG Director Martha Coolidge
Producer Karen Danaher-Dorr Screenplay Gerald Ayres Lead Actors Holly Hunter, Gena Rowlands, Julian Sands, Bill Pullman, Frances McDormand 90 minutes

A flighty woman (Hunter) is led astray from her marriage by a handsome English photographer (Sands). Although somewhat slight, this finely directed and well acted bittersweet romantic comedy is worth a look.

De Vinci's War

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 19840

Certificate 18 Director Raymond Martino
Producers Joey Travolta, Stephen H. Rockmael Screenplay Raymond Martino
Lead Actors Michael Nouri, Joey Travolta, Vanity, Richard Foronjy 92 minutes
A Vietnam vet avenges the murder of his sister by rounding up his old comrades and taking the law into his own hands. A violent action pic.

Dirty Work

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2696

Certificate 15 Director John McPherson
Producer Tom Rowe Screenplay Aaron Julien Lead Actors Kevin Dobson, John Ashton, Roxann Biggs, Mitchell Ryan 84 minutes
TV action thriller. A disreputable bail-bond merchant, on the run from the mob after killing a drug dealer, sets up his partner to take the rap.

Doppelgänger

USA 1992/ITC 8402

Certificate 18 Director Avi Nesher Producer Donald P. Borchers Screenplay Avi Nesher
Lead Actors Drew Barrymore, George Newbern, Dennis Christopher, Leslie Hope 100 minutes
A cracking horror tale, inventively written and efficiently directed. A schizophrenic woman suspected of matricide is surrounded by a web of intrigue and violence. Barrymore cements her reputation as the rising queen of Rental Premiere.

Lady Bees

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 335

Certificate 13 Director Charles Jarrott
Producer Steve McGlothen Screenplay Jackie Collins Lead Actors Kim Delaney, Jack Scalia, Alan Rachins, Phil Morris 175 minutes
TV mini-series adaptation of Jackie Collins' pulp best-seller.

Legacy of Lies

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1608

Certificate 15 Director Bradford Way
Producer Barry Berg Screenplay David Black Lead Actors Martin Landau,



A return to innocence: 'Zéro de conduite'

Michael Ontkean, Eli Wallach 90 minutes
A well written and performed TV thriller, played out against the backdrop of the Jewish mafia. A troubled cop (Ontkean) attempts to come to terms with his family's violent heritage. A new twist on the gangster formula.

The Linguist Incident

USA 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 19367

Certificate 15 Director Richard Shepard
Producer Arnold Orgolino Screenplay
Tamar Brott, Richard Shepard Lead Actors
David Bowie, Rosanna Arquette,
Eszter Balint, André Gregory,
Viveca Lindfors 105 minutes
Dreadful romantic comedy, fortunately spared a UK theatrical release. Arquette as an escapist and Bowie as a suave conman vie for the worst actor award.

Mission of Justice

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20181

Certificate 18 Director Steve Barnett
Producers Pierre David, Kurt Anderson
Screenplay George Saunders, John Bryant
Hedberg Lead Actors Jeff Wincot, Brigitte
Nielsen, Luca Bercovici, Matthias Hues
95 minutes

A disillusioned cop abandons the police force to avenge the murder of his boxing buddy. High-kicking karate action movie, spiced up by Nielsen as a fiendish villain.

Night Visions

USA 1990/MGM/UA/Warner PEV 53090

Certificate 15 Director Wes Craven
Producers Rick Nathanson, Thomas Baum,
Marianne Maddelena Screenplay
Wes Craven Lead Actors Loryn Locklin,
James Remar 89 minutes
Craven's inventive pilot for an unrealised TV series teams a jaded cop with a fey psychic woman who uses her powers to track a killer. A promising idea.

Overkill

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 337

Certificate 15 Director Peter Levin Producer
William Beaudine Screenplay Fred Mills
Lead Actors Jean Smart, Park Overall,
Tim Grimm, Ernie Lively, Geoffrey Rivas
93 minutes
The first of what will surely be a host of films about the life of America's first female serial killer, Aileen Wuornos. Predictably, this sanitised TV film ignores Wuornos' lesbian relationship with her partner and offers few insights into her psyche.

Over the Hill

Australia 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 18591

Certificate PG Director George Miller
Producers Robert Caswell, Bernard Terry
Screenplay Robert Caswell Lead Actors
Olympia Dukakis, Sigrid Thornton,
Derek Fowlds 99 minutes
A whimsical road movie following the adventures of a sixty-year-old woman who sets off across Australia in an old Chevy after finding herself unwelcome in her daughter's home.

Poison Ivy

USA 1992/Guild 8713

Certificate 18 Director Katt Shea Ruben
Producer Andy Ruben Screenplay
Andy Ruben, Katt Shea Ruben Lead Actors
Drew Barrymore, Tom Skerritt,
Sara Gilbert, Cheryl Ladd 90 minutes
Rental Premiere of the month. This ingenious psycho-thriller draws on both art-house and exploitation cinema.

Barrymore is excellent as the untameable outsider who infiltrates and rips apart a middle-class family already racked with inner tensions.

Prey of the Chameleon

USA 1991/
Imperial Entertainment IMP 117

Certificate 18 Director Fleming Fuller
Producers Pat Peach, Ron Rothstein
Screenplay April Campbell Jones,
Fleming Fuller Lead Actors
Daphne Zuniga, James Wilder,
Alexandra Paul, Don Harvey 91 minutes
Entertainingly silly trash thriller about a cross-dressing psycho killer who steals the clothes and identities of her victims.

The Secret Passion of Robert Clayton

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 2701

Certificate 15 Director E.W. Swackhamer
Producer Ed Milkovich Screenplay
Brian Ross Lead Actors John Mahoney,
Scott Valentine, Eve Gordon,
Kevin Conroy 87 minutes
Bland TV erotic thriller. A big city lawyer does battle against his attorney father in court over a murder case involving his lover.

Shadowhunter

USA 1992/Medusa/20.20 Vision MO 389

Certificate 18 Director J.S. Cardone
Producers Carol Kottenbrook,
Scott Einbinder Screenplay J.S. Cardone
Lead Actors Scott Glen, Angela Alvarado,
Robert Beltran, Benjamin Bratt
90 minutes

A murder mystery set on a Native American reservation. Glen delivers a powerful performance as a city cop seduced by Indian magic. Intelligent and engrossing.

Slowburn

Canada 1989/First Independent VA 20179

Certificate 18 Director John Eyres Executive
Producers John Eyres, Geoff Griffiths,
John Curtis, Zafar Malik, Lloyd Simandl
Screenplay Steven Lister Lead Actors
William Smith, Anthony James, Ivan
Rogers, Scott Anderson 94 minutes
A New York narcotics detective uses unconventional and violent methods to infiltrate warring gangs.

Solomon's Choice

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 334

Certificate PG Director Andrew Tennant
Executive Producer Andrew Adelson
Screenplay Sandra Jennings, Maggie
Kleinman Lead Actors Joanna Kerns,
Bruce Davison, Reese Witherspoon,
Joseph Mazzello 90 minutes
True-life TV trauma movie about two parents who struggle to find a bone-marrow donor for their sick daughter.

Steel Justice

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1599

Certificate PG Director Christopher Crowe
Producer Stephen Lovejoy
Screenplay Christopher Crowe, John Hill
Lead Actors Robert Taylor, J.R. Preston,
Roy Brocksmith 87 minutes
Ridiculous but amusing sci-fi thriller. A cop, devastated by the death of his son, is visited by an amiable alien who offers him hope in the shape of a gigantic robot named Robosaurus.

Stompin' at the Savoy

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1600

Certificate PG Director Debbie Allen

Executive Producer Richard Maynard

Screenplay Beverly Sayer Lead Actors
Lynn Whitfield, Vanessa Williams,
Jasmine Guy, Mario Van Peebles

91 minutes

Upbeat TV movie set in 30s Harlem, used as a showcase for upcoming black actors. Four women with dreams of success dance away their troubles at the Savoy.

Talons of the Eagle

USA 1992/Braveworld BRV 10148

Certificate 18 Director Michael Kennedy
Producer Jalal Merhi Screenplay J. Stephen
Maunder Lead Actors Billy Blanks,
Jalal Merhi, James Hong, Priscilla
Barnes 93 minutes

Muscle-flexing action abounds as two undercover cops infiltrate a New York crime lord's operation following the murder of two DEA agents.

Twin Sisters

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20178

Certificate 15 Director Tom Berry Producers
Tom Berry, Franco Battista Screenplay
David Preston Lead Actors
Stephanie Kramer, Susan Almgren,
Frederic Forrest, James Brolin 89 minutes
A wealthy career woman poses as her identical twin sister to learn more about her death, uncovering a world of prostitution and vice in the process.

Retail

After Hours

USA 1985/Warner PES 11528 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Martin Scorsese
Scorsese's underrated yuppie nightmare has Griffin Dunne unsuccessfully trying to get home from New York's SoHo district during the course of one night, and becoming an unwilling witness to the Big Apple's weirder side. (MFB No. 629)

Alligator

USA 1980/
Braveworld STV 2080 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Lewis Teague
A baby alligator ends up down Chicago's sewers, where it grows up to be a 36-foot monster. Enlivened by a witty John Sayles script, this followed in the wake of the many post-Jaws monster movies. (MFB No. 582)

Alligator 2: The Mutation

USA 1990/
Braveworld STV 2081 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jon Hess
Poor sequel which is only made bearable by ridiculous scenes of a stuffed alligator terrorising hordes of screaming extras. (S&S December 1991/Video Premiere)

Annie Hall

USA 1977/MGM/UA PES 50251 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Woody Allen
Welcome return for Allen's exquisite Oscar-winning romantic comedy starring the director and Diane Keaton. Like *After Hours*, this appears under the new Elite Collection label. (MFB No. 525)

Another Year

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 22981
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Maurice Phillips
(S&S September 1992/Video Premiere)

La Belle Noiseuse

France 1991/Artificial Eye ART 038
Price £22.49 (2 tapes)

Certificate 15 Director Jacques Rivette
Previously available in the two-hour 'Divertimento' version, this ravishing study of a painter and his muse won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1991. Michel Piccoli is inspired to complete an unfinished painting when a young woman (Emmanuelle Béart) enters his world. Full length version/Subtitles (S&S April 1992)

Bugsy

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 23645
Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Barry Levinson
Also available in widescreen (S&S April 1992)

Cape Fear

USA 1991/CIC Video VHR 1557
Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Martin Scorsese
(S&S March 1992)

The Cincinnati Kid

USA 1965/MGM/UA PES 50135 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Norman Jewison
To poker what *The Hustler* was to pool, this card-playing epic set in the 30s stars Steve McQueen and Edward G. Robinson. Jewison replaced Peckinpah at the start of shooting. (MFB No. 383)

Deceived

USA 1991/Touchstone D 413062
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Damian Harris
(S&S April 1992)

Desert Law

Italy/USA Year unknown/MIA V 3358
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Duccio Tessari
(S&S January 1992/Video Premiere)

Diary of a Chambermaid (Le Journal d'une femme de chambre)

France 1963/Electric Pictures EP 0013
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Luis Buñuel
Jeanne Moreau is brilliant as poor Celestine who leaves 30s Paris to work as a chambermaid in a provincial household, where she acts as a catalyst to the householders' repressions. Vintage Buñuel, foot fetishism and all. Subtitles (MFB No. 380)



Jeanne Moreau: 'Diary of a Chambermaid'

Dying Young

USA 1991/ FoxVideo 1914 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Joel Schumacher
(S&S September 1991)

Equus

USA 1977/MGM/UA PES 50675 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Sidney Lumet
Lumet's adaptation of Peter Shaffer's stage play is admirable but ultimately turgid and wordy. None the less it does feature one of Richard Burton's finest performances. (MFB No. 526)

Father of the Bride

USA 1991/Touchstone D 413352
Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Charles Shyer
(S&S March 1992)

Flirting

Australia 1991/Warner PES 12333
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director John Duigan
(S&S November 1991)

Ghosts...of the Civil Dead

Australia 1988/Electric EP 0022
Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director John Hillcoat
This tale of a prison lock-down and the events that led to the crisis is best seen for its impressive production design and clinical photography rather than for its confused narrative. An atmosphere of extreme menace is conjured up, in part through a top performance by Nick Cave. (MFB No. 665)

Homicide

USA 1991/First Independent VA 30260
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director David Mamet
(S&S November 1991)

Hook

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 13187
Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Steven Spielberg
Also available in widescreen (S&S April 1992)

Hot Shots

USA 1991/FoxVideo 1930 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Jim Abrahams
(S&S January 1992)

Killer Nun (Suor omicida)

Italy 1978/Redemption RED 005
Price £12.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Giulio Berruti
Producer Enzo Gaalo Screenplay Giulio Berruti, Alberto Tarallo Lead Actors Anita Ekberg, Alida Valli, Massimo Serato, Lou Castel, Joe Dallesandro 87 minutes
70s shock-schlock involving lesbian nuns and S&M. A couple of Hitchcock-style set pieces are not enough to carry this nonsense. Subtitles (Retail Premiere)

King of New York

USA 1989/VCI VC 3416 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Abel Ferrara
With Ferrara and the new brutalism in vogue, this is a good time to look again at this stylish gangster thriller starring Christopher Walken. (S&S July 1991)

The Manchurian Candidate

USA 1962/MGM/UA PES 51369 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director John Frankenheimer
Frankenheimer's masterpiece of paranoia has influenced many films, most recently Jacob's Ladder. A Korean war hero



Paranoid: Laurence Harvey, Angela Lansbury in 'The Manchurian Candidate'

(Laurence Harvey) returns home as a brainwashed zombie programmed to kill a politician. (MFB No. 656)

My Girl

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 23647
Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Howard Zieff
(S&S February 1992)

Network

USA 1976/MGM/UA PES 50012 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Sidney Lumet
An outrageous satire on TV programming that caught the public eye when first released but now appears dated. Peter Finch and Faye Dunaway received Oscars for their performances. (MFB No. 539)

Peter Pan

USA 1952/Walt Disney D 202452
Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Hamilton Luske
More magical than Spielberg's woeful Hook, Disney's animated version of Barrie's play is arguably also more effective. Hans Conried (the voice of Hook) is worth a mention, as is the combination of music, action and comedy. A simultaneous rental and retail release. (MFB No. 232)

The Phantom of Liberty (Le Fantôme de la Liberté)

France 1974/Electric EP 0012 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Luis Buñuel
The most distinguishing facet of this revel in sex, religion and politics is the narrative structure which casually links episodes set in nineteenth-century Spain to those set in contemporary Paris. The most famous vignette is the dinner party at which chairs and toilets are substituted for one another. Subtitles (MFB No. 493)

Prince of Tides

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 22840
Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Barbra Streisand
Also available in widescreen (S&S March 1992)

Rebecca's Daughters

UK 1992/Curzon CV 0015 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Karl Francis
(S&S May 1992)

Reefers Madness

USA 1938/VVL VVD 1077 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Louis Gasnier
Producer George A. Hirliman Screenplay

Arthur Hoerl Lead Actors Dorothy Short, Kenneth Craig, Lillian Miles, Dave O'Brien, Thelma White 60 minutes
Shown regularly on the college circuits, this pseudo-documentary was made to inform the public of the perils of marijuana. Not as good as its reputation, but with some priceless moments of unintentional hilarity. (Retail Premiere)

The Right Stuff

USA 1983/Warner PES 20014 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Philip Kaufman
Kaufman's masterly epic, based on Tom Wolfe's novel about the first flights into space. Best seen for its remarkable ensemble cast - including Scott Glen, Ed Harris, Dennis Quaid, Sam Shepard and Barbara Hershey. (MFB No. 602)

Salon Kitty

Italy/Germany/France 1976/
Redemption RED 004 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Tinto Brass
A cross between *The Damned*, *Personal Services* and *Caligula*. Brass looks at the fall of the Nazi empire through a kinky brothel operation set up to catch traitors' pillow talk. (MFB No. 524)

Scanners II: The New Order

USA 1991/Braveworld STV 2136
Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Christian Duguay
(S&S December 1991/Video Premiere)

Separate but Equal

USA 1991/Odyssey ODY 744 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director George Stevens Jnr
(S&S January 1992/Video Premiere)

Son of the Morning Star

USA 1991/Odyssey ODY 728 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director Mike Robe
(S&S December 1991/Video Premiere)

Summer City

Australia 1976/MIA V 3356 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Christopher Fraser
Producer/Screenplay Phil Avalon Lead Actors John Jarrat, Phil Avalon, Steve Bisley, Mel Gibson 82 minutes
Low-budget Australian beach movie which suffers from poor sound quality and a run-of-the-mill story. Set in the 50s, four surfing buddies run into trouble when one of them begins dating a local girl at a beach resort. (Retail Premiere)

Teen Agent

USA 1991/Warner PES 12071 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director William Dear
(S&S October 1991)

Thunderbolt and Lightfoot

USA 1974/MGM/UA PES 51392 Price £8.99

Certificate 18 Director Michael Cimino
An odd but engaging road movie-cum-thriller - which has cult status - starring Clint Eastwood and Jeff Bridges. A bank robber tries to avoid his ex-partners who believe that he has betrayed them. (MFB No. 487)

Ultraman

Japan/Australia 1991/Island U/LTV 1001
Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Andrew Prowse
Producers Kiyoshi Suzuki, Sue Wild Screenplay Terry Larsen Lead Actors Dore Kraus, Gia Carides, Ralph Cotterill, Grace Parr 94 minutes
Echoes of Godzilla in this live-action feature, made to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Japan's long-running cult TV series. Ultraman battles against an alien villain who threatens the world. (Retail Premiere)

V.I. Warshawski

USA 1991/Hollywood D 912540
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jeff Kanew
(S&S January 1992)

Wayne's World

USA 1992/CIC Video VHR 2628
Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Penelope Spheeris
(S&S June 1992)

Winning

USA 1969/Video Legends VLG 1605
Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director James Goldstone
Well-made but dull melodrama in which Paul Newman indulges his love of the race track. Newman plays a racing driver so caught up in his work that his wife begins to take an exceptional interest in his partner (Robert Wagner). (MFB No. 430)

Young Soul Rebels

UK 1991/Braveworld STV 2195
Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Isaac Julien
(S&S September 1991)

Zéro de conduite

France 1933/Artificial Eye ART 054
Price £12.99

Certificate U Director Jean Vigo
This newly-restored print is the most complete version of Vigo's film. Noted for its influence on the French *nouvelle vague*, *Zéro de conduite* caused a furore at the time with its tale of pupils rebelling against a repressive boarding school system. See 'A cutting art', page 67. B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 153)

Retail Collections

Dr Who and the Daleks/ Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150 AD

UK 1965/1966/MGM UA PES 38328
Price £12.99

Certificate U Director Gordon Flemyng
Thirty years old this year, the hit TV series *Dr Who* spawned these two collectable but tiresome full-length features. Peter Cushing stars. (MFB Nos. 379/391)

Norman McLaren: Creative Process

Canada/UK 1990/Connoisseur CR 104
£15.99

Certificate PG Director Donald McWilliams
Producer David Verrall Screenplay Donald
McWilliams, Susan Huycke 116 minutes
McWilliams illuminates McLaren's
artistic method, using experimental
footage and extracts from his
uncompleted films. This documentary
was completed eight years after
McLaren's death. (Retail Premiere)

Norman McLaren: Selected Films

Canada 1993/Connoisseur CR 103 £15.99

Certificate PG Director Norman McLaren
Producer David Verrall Screenplay Norman
McLaren 114 minutes
McLaren's range is well illustrated here
with 14 of the director's 60 short films,
including the award-winning *Neighbours*.
(Retail Premiere)

Ray Harryhausen Sci-Fi Collection: Earth vs the Flying Saucers/First Men in the Moon

USA 1956/1964/Columbia TriStar CVR
P52 Price £10.99

Certificate U Directors Fred F. Sears/
Nathan Juran

It Came from Beneath the Sea/ 20 Million Miles to Earth

USA 1954/1957/Columbia TriStar CVR P51
Price £10.99

Certificate PG/U Directors Robert Gordon/
Nathan Juran
Two impressive sci-fi double-movie tapes
with Harryhausen special effects. *Earth vs*
the Flying Saucers gives a superb rendition
of the clichéd invasion from space theme
and Lionel Jeffries steals the show as the
nutty professor who flies to the moon in
First Men in the Moon. A giant octopus goes
on the rampage in *It Came from Beneath*
the Sea – a must-see classic – and another
sea monster makes an appearance in
20 Million Miles to Earth.
(MFB Nos. 281/386/258/286)

The MGM Musical Collection: An American in Paris

USA 1951/MGM/UA PES 50806
Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Vincente Minnelli
A six-times Oscar winner, this classic
musical love story stars Gene Kelly and
Leslie Caron. (MFB No. 323)

Brigadoon

USA 1954/MGM/UA PES 50040
Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Vincente Minnelli
Based on the hit Broadway show, a
fantasy set in the mythical mists of
Scotland. (MFB No. 258)

Easter Parade

USA 1948/MGM/UA PES 50256
Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Charles Walters
When Gene Kelly damaged an ankle on
the eve of production, MGM replaced
him with Fred Astaire in this Irving
Berlin musical. (MFB No. 180)

Meet Me in St Louis

USA 1944/MGM/UA/PES 50005
Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Vincente Minnelli
A tale of a turn-of-the-century family
having to move to New York from St
Louis. Judy Garland sings her heart out.
(MFB No. 134)

On the Town

USA 1949/MGM UA PES 50057
Price £10.99

Certificate U Directors Gene Kelly/
Stanley Donen

Three sailors spend 24 hours on shore
leave in New York in this seminal
musical. Kelly's dance routines are
regarded as some of the best ever.
(MFB No. 194)

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers

USA 1954/MGM/UA PES 50091
Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Stanley Donen

Brilliant set pieces and an excellent score
enliven this stodgy box-office smash hit
about seven brothers who comb the local
villages for spouses. (MFB No. 251)

Laser disc

The Arrangement

Tartan/Blue Dolphin TVL 050

PAL CLV Widescreen 1.66:1

USA 1969 £29.95

Certificate 13 Director Elia Kazan
(MFB No. 434)

Bedlands

Tartan/Blue Dolphin TVL 047

PAL CLV Widescreen 1.66:1

USA 1974 £29.95

Certificate 18 Director Terrence Malick
(MFB No. 490)

Bridge on the River Kwai

Columbia TriStar LD 10001

PAL CLV (2 disc set) Widescreen 2.35:1
Dolby stereo

UK 1957 £34.99

Certificate PG Director David Lean
Equally loved and hated by contemporary
critics, Lean's classic war story stars
Alec Guinness as a POW who builds a
bridge to boost the morale of his
comrades, only to see it used by the
Japanese. (MFB No. 286)

Ghostbusters/Ghostbusters II

Columbia TriStar LD 13119

PAL CLV (2 disc set) Widescreen

2.35:1/1.66:1 Dolby stereo

USA 1984/1989 £34.99

Certificate PG Director Ivan Reitman
Dan Aykroyd and Bill Murray lead the
beautifully straight-faced cast in the
original comedy-fantasy blockbuster,
which spawned the money-spinning but
lacklustre sequel. (MFB Nos. 611/671)

Running on Empty

Pioneer PLFEB 30551

PAL CLV Fullscreen 1.33:1 Dolby surround
USA 1988 £24.99

Certificate 15 Director Sidney Lumet

This politically astute rites of passage
movie boasts the finest performance
of River Phoenix's career. A young boy
attempts to come to terms with maturity
while his ex-radical parents (Christine
Lahti, Judd Hirsch) evade the law.
(MFB No. 667)

The Terminal Man

Tartan/Blue Dolphin 049

PAL CLV Widescreen 1.75:1

USA 1974 £29.95

Certificate 15 Director Mike Hodges
(MFB No. 643)

WIND UP

By Peter Dean

The special-interest section of a good retail store
can throw up any number of curios. 'How to Train
Your Gun Dog' is one of the more obscure, but
it's no stranger than 'Royal Four in Hand with
HRH Duke of Edinburgh' – a film about the Duke's
limited-appeal brand of carriage racing.
The Windsors are big business on video, with
50-odd documentaries ranging from last year's
'Elizabeth R' to 'Diana – Model Princess' – an
analysis of her fashion sense.

When the BBC launched its video arm in 1981
it did so with a commemorative video of Charles
and Diana's wedding, 'The Royal Wedding', and
discovered that ardent royalists would buy videos
as they once collected coronation mugs and
biscuit tins. With Andrew and Fergie's marriage
two different videos were in the stores the
following day – the BBC video earning itself
a place in the record books as the fastest-ever
produced (24 hours including sleeve, duplication
and delivery to the shops). It is a sign of the times
that both of these royal wedding videos have now
been deleted from the BBC list. But images of the
royal family are still effective in selling non-royal
tapes: they can be found on the covers of many
of the Pathé newsreel videos and the similar
'Memories' series and are staples for feature
films, television series and comedy tapes like
'Spitting Image' and the soap-spoof 'Pallas'.

Within this context, it is not surprising to see
the emergence of a group of dramatised royal
'divorce' videos – a new sub-genre using
lookalike actors to play out scenes from royal
marriage fiascos – that comprises the triptych
of 'Andrew & Fergie – Behind the Palace Doors'
(Columbia TriStar, £10.99), 'The Fall of the
House of Windsor' (Scimitar, £10.99) and
'Diana: Her True Story' (Starvision, £13.99).
Not since the 'Raid on Entebbe' films has there
been such a surge of dubious productions relying
on the same raw material.

To judge by the success of Andrew Morton's
book, 'Diana' the video will no doubt move
straight into the charts on its 23 March release,
aided by the massive publicity campaign that
accompanied BSKyB's exclusive screening. The
video is also targeted at the international market
for which the other two titles were primarily
produced. A direct outcome of the royal family's
"annus horribilis", these what-the-footman-saw
peeks at royal disharmony are soaps whose plot
we are all familiar with thanks to the popular
press. Every notorious tabloid photograph and
headline-making scene is re-enacted, but where
the dramas reach behind palace doors the
verisimilitude falls.

"I married Randy Andy and I ended up living
with Andy Capp," Fergie berates her couch-
potato husband before arranging a photo shoot



Royal Dailies: 'Diana: Her True Story'

in 'Hooray' (sic) magazine. Fact or fantasy, these
films are almost like tabloid journalism brought
to life. In 'Diana', the princess returns to
Kensington Palace alone and is seen practising
her ballet to the strains of 'Swan Lake', only to be
interrupted by the news of the death of a close
friend. Events in the 1988 royal feature 'The
Lion in Winter' (whose producer Martin Poll
executive-produced 'Diana') may be equally
fauciful, but it's less easy to spot at a historical
distance.

What all three videos share, apart from their
'Dynasty'-like conventions (extensive close-ups,
climaxes every ten minutes with slow fade-outs),
is a healthy disregard for the royal family as
an institution. Each shows the 'outsiders' to
this world rebuffed by 'The Firm'. Romance
becomes 'The Job'.

Of course for loyal subjects, all this video
attention is simply beyond the pale. When the
documentary 'Diana – A Portrait' was to be
launched at the Savoy last year, amid news of
the break-up of the Charles/Diana marriage,
invitations were hastily recalled when the hotel
discovered what the launch was for. Terrestrial
television has similarly kept a distance –
out of respect or because the franchise battle
is still fresh in the minds of the inhabitants of
the boardrooms.

But all this reticence does is to leave the 'bad
boys' of home entertainment (BSKyB and video)
to deliver the films and form a de facto
relationship – one which only occurs when the
satellite channel has an exclusive licence to a
programme. It has happened in the past with
sporting events that take a dramatic turn –
Tyson's defeat by Douglas and Ruddock's defeat
by Lewis – witnessed on television only by the
limited audience with satellite dishes. Should
video sales of the royal fisticuffs prove
successful, actors resembling Princes Harry
and William should be contacting their agents
straight away. That, or make way for the Sega
and Nintendo versions.



Married to The Family: 'Diana: Her True Story'

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Unfair

From Stephen Bourne

While Andrea Stuart's 'Making Whoopi' (S&S February) offers some fascinating insights into the complexities surrounding Whoopi Goldberg's problematic screen persona, I want to take issue with some of the misrepresentations in the author's argument.

To begin with, the great Hattie McDaniel never portrayed Mammy in *Gone With the Wind* with "brick bosom and bulging eyes". Though not militant and politically active like some of her contemporaries, such as Paul Robeson, McDaniel was nevertheless a clever, gifted actress with a flair for playing broad comedy. McDaniel's mummies were never submissive or subservient. Time and time again, McDaniel breathed life into Beulah, Cleota and Delilah, giving them a wide range of moods: aggressive, defiant, camp, hostile, flamboyant and tough. These were not the roles as written, but the creations of an actress that Hollywood failed to stifle.

In *Gone With the Wind*, Hattie's co-star Butterfly McQueen did not portray the "classic 'pickaninny'". Her performance has been accurately described by the black film historian Donald Bogle: "...had she been a mere pickaninny, she might have engendered hostility or embarrassed audiences. Instead she seemed to provide an outlet for the repressed fears of the audience. Her performance is marked by fragility, hysteria and absurdity. She is a unique combination of the comic and the pathetic."

Stuart claims that Goldberg has avoided the "female stereotype" played by Hattie McDaniel. Yet in most of her comedy films Goldberg's characters are reminiscent of McDaniel's. For example, in *Ghost*, Oda Mae Brown is to Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze what Mammy is to Scarlett and Rhett. Like McDaniel, Goldberg deservedly won an Oscar for subverting and transforming an underwritten and stereotypical role. Mammy and Oda are safe and non-threatening for mass white consumption but McDaniel and Goldberg made them memorable screen characters. I agree that Goldberg has rarely been seen in the arms of a black lover, but at least in *The Long Walk Home* (1990) she is married and has a warm and loving relationship with her family.

Though Hollywood's track record for giving decent roles to black actresses is poor, Stuart is wrong to say that only four actresses have received Oscar nominations. Let us not forget the other eight she fails to mention: Ethel Waters, Juanita Moore, Beah Richards, Diana Ross, Diahann Carroll, Alfre Woodard, Margaret Avery and Oprah Winfrey.

London SE5

Riefenstahl's nature

From Peter McCall

It has been suggested that there is a connection between Leni Riefenstahl's love of nature and the human body, and fascist aesthetics (Thomas Elsaesser, S&S February). However, it seems to me that Professor



Let us be fair: Leni Riefenstahl

Elsaesser left out some important facts in his article.

My point is that Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* is entirely non-political. It celebrates, via the 1936 Olympics, the beauty of the human body in action on the field of sport and athletics. The film gives equal coverage to athletes of all nations, showing to advantage, for example, the achievements of the great black American athlete Jesse Owens. The film concentrates very little on Hitler and other members of the Nazi Party in the stadium, giving them no more coverage than would have been accorded any head of state of a host country.

Let us be fair. In *Olympia*, Leni Riefenstahl made a very beautiful, non-political film to be enjoyed by all peoples of all races throughout the world. Doctor Goebbels' propaganda ministry may well have tried to have the achievements of Owens and others edited out, but the fact remains that it was released to the world giving full coverage to Owens and his great achievements. The film went on to win the Grand Prix at the 1938 Venice Film Festival, but in spite of this, it was not shown publicly in Great Britain and America – for 'political' reasons.

Controversy continues to surround Leni Riefenstahl as a great documentary filmmaker working in Nazi Germany in the 30s and 40s. Perhaps she should be viewed in the same light as, say, that of any of the great German engineers and industrialists working in Germany in the same period whose products we today drive, use in our homes and enjoy.

Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire

Zero

From Alan Lovell

"The zero moments of image and sound indicate how at the centre of any representation or communication there is a vertiginous emptiness – moments of solitude or madness which resist symbolisation but which are also the space where new thoughts and realities emerge" (Colin McCabe on Bernard Rose, S&S March).

"Have you read the latest McCabe?"

– "Yes, it's absolute rubbish" (Dialogue from *Candyman*).

Coventry

Wheelchair cinema

From Simon Prosser

A recent incident at the Cardiff MGM cinema, in which a disabled person was turned away from a screening, led the manager to proclaim proudly that two seats had been removed from one of the three auditoria to facilitate wheelchair access.

Are disabled people in South Wales supposed to be grateful for this crass gesture?

Are the disabled all over Britain to take heart that the MGM in Cardiff is showing the way forward? No.

We, as the cinemagoing public, cannot put up with this disgusting situation. We must demand change from the cinemas and the government. Films are the art form of the people, but still today many of the people are excluded from this art. A cinema would not be allowed to open without proper fire escapes, or even toilet facilities, but it seems as though these big, hugely profitable companies can please themselves about their policy towards disabled people.

Surely the Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke must act now and stop discrimination in the cinemas and demand equal rights for everyone to watch a film.

Yaysadu, Gwent

● We contacted Cardiff MGM and were referred to John Osborne, MGM Cinema's Media Spokesperson. These are his comments:

MGM do their best to provide wheelchair access, but are limited by the building structure of older cinemas. The 30s single-screen theatres have been converted into split-level multiscreens, whose upper levels are inaccessible to some disabled people because there are too many stairs.

Home Office cinema guidelines state that wheelchairs should be admitted to ground-level screens only, and Cardiff does have one screen with three wheelchair spaces. Under the safety regulations, the licensing authority must consent before disabled people can be admitted to the cinema. When MGM last surveyed the cinema in 1977, the City Council decided that Cardiff MGM's upstairs screens were still unsafe for wheelchair access.

Undubbed

From Mairi Macdonald

Chief Film Buyer, Channel 4

I was surprised to read in the March issue of *Sight and Sound* that Channel 4 was considering dubbing "foreign" films. As far as I'm concerned Channel 4 will continue to show movies as they have been made (subject to ITC regulations), including the widest possible range of world cinema – undubbed.

London W1

Funny fate

From Philip Kemp

A footnote to Lizzie Francke's appreciation of Audrey Hepburn (S&S March): her most prominent pre-Roman *Holiday* screen role wasn't the brief and enchanting moment in *Lavender Hill Mob* (which incidentally occurs not "in the final minutes" but in the opening scene). Hepburn's biggest part in her early years came in a less well-remembered Ealing picture: Thorold Dickinson's uneasy, ill-starred political melodrama *Secret People*, where she was billed in third place as the heroine's sister.

But it's quite true that British producers inexplicably ignored her individuality and beauty. (Michael Balcon later kicked himself for having failed to put her under contract). Although given the British cinema's woeful misuse of other witty, idiosyncratic actresses of the period (Joan Greenwood, Kay Kendall, Glynis Johns), it's perhaps just as well – for Hepburn and for us – that she made the break to Hollywood.

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